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THE DAWN

BY EMILE
VERHAEREN

TRANSLATED
BY ARTHUR
SYMONS

CHARLES H.
SERGEL CO.
CHICAGO-1898.

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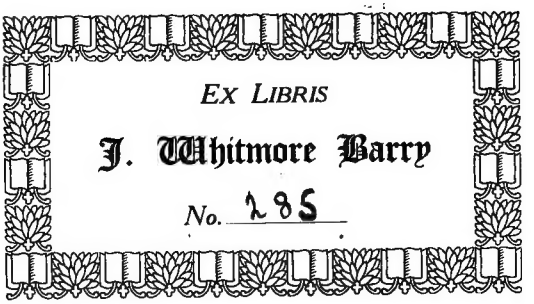

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MODERN PLAYS

EDITED BY

R. BRIMLEY JOHNSON

AND

N. ERICHSEN

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THE DAWN

(*LES AUBES*)

BY EMILE VERHAEREN

TRANSLATED BY

ARTHUR SYMONS

CHICAGO
CHARLES H. SERGEL COMPANY
1898

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INTRODUCTION

THE poetry of Émile Verhaeren, more than that of any other modern poet, is made directly out of the complaining voices of the nerves. Other writers, certainly, have been indirectly indebted to the effect of nerves on temperament, but M. Verhaeren seems to express only so much of a temperament as finds its expression through their immediate medium. In his early books "Les Flamandes," "Les Moines" (reprinted, with "Les Bords de la Route," containing earlier and later work, in the first of his two volumes of collected poems), he began by a solid, heavily coloured, exterior manner of painting *genre* pictures in the Flemish style. Such poems as "Les Paysans," with its fury of description, are like a Teniers in verse; not Breughel has painted a kermesse with hotter colours, a more complete abandonment to the sunlight, wine, and gross passions of those Flemish feasts. This first book, "Les Flamandes," belongs to the Naturalistic movement; but it has already (as in the similar commencements of Huysmans) so ardent a love of colour for its own sake, colour becoming lyrical, that one realizes how soon this absorption in the daily life of farms, kitchens, stables, will give place to another kind of interest. And in "Les Moines," while there is still for the most part the painting of exteriorities, a new sentiment, by no means the religious sentiment, but an artistic interest in what is less material, less assertive in things, finds for itself an entirely new

scheme of colour. Here, for instance, was "Cuisson de Pain," in the first book:

"Dehors, les grands fournils chauffaient leurs braises rouges,
Et deux par deux, du bout d'une planche, les gouges
Dans le ventre des fours engouffraient les pains mous.

"Et les flammes, par les gueules s'ouvrant passage,
Comme une meute énorme et chaude de chiens roux,
Sautaient en rugissant leur mordre le visage."

Now, in the second, we have "Soir Religieux":

"Et voici l'angelus, dont la voix tranquillise
La douleur qui s'épand sur ce mourant décor,
Tandis que les grands bras des vieux clochers d'église
Tendent leurs croix de fer par-dessus les champs d'or."

But it is not until "Les Soirs" (the first of the three books reprinted in the second volume of the collected edition) that we find what was to be the really individual style developing itself. It develops itself at first with a certain heaviness. Here is a poet who writes in images: good; but the images are larger than the ideas. Wishing to say that the hour was struck, he says:

"Seul un beffroi,
Immensément vêtu de nuit, cassait les heures."

And, indeed, everything must be done "immensément." The word is repeated on every page, sometimes twice in a stanza. The effect of monotony in rhythm, the significant, chiming recurrence of words, the recoil of a line upon itself, the dwindling away or the heaping up of sound in line after line, the shock of an unexpected cæsura, the delay and the hastened speed of syllables: all these arts of a very conscious technique are elaborated with somewhat too obvious an intention. There is

splendour, opulence, and, for the first time, "such stuff as dreams are made of." Description is no longer made for its own sake; it becomes metaphor. And this metaphor is entirely new. It may be called exaggerated, affected even; but it is new, and it is expressive:

"Les chiens du désespoir, les chiens du vent d'automne,
Mordent de leurs abois les échos noirs des soirs,
Et l'ombre, immensément, dans le vide, tâtonne
Vers la lune, mirée au clair des abreuvoirs."

In "Les Débâcles," a year later, this art of writing in coloured and audible metaphor, and on increasingly abstract and psychological subjects, the sensations externalized, has become more master of itself, and at the same time more immediately the servant of a more and more feverish nervous organization.

"Tu seras le fiévreux ployé, sur les fenêtres,
D'où l'on peut voir bondir la vie et ses chars d'or."

And the contemplation of this "fiévreux" is turned more and more in upon itself, finding in its vision of the outer world only a mirrored image of its own disasters. The sick man, looking down on his thin fingers, can think of them only in this morbid, this monastic way:

"Mes doigts, touchez mon front et cherchez, là,
Les vers qui rongeront, un jour, de leur morsure,
Mes chairs; touchez mon front, mes maigres doigts, violà
Que mes veines déjà, comme une meurtrissure
Bleuâtre, étrangement, en font la tour, mes las
Et pauvres doigts—et que vos longs ongles malades
Battent, sinistrement, sur mes tempes, un glas,
Un pauvre glas, mes lents et mornes doigts!"

Two years later, with "Les Flambeaux Noirs," what was nervous has become almost a sort of very conscious

madness: the hand on one's own pulse, the eyes watching themselves in the glass with an unswerving fixity, but a breaking and twisting of the links of things, a doubling and division of the mind's sight, which might be met with, less picturesquely, in actual madness. There are two poems, "Le Roc" and "Les Livres," which give, in a really terrifying way, the very movement of idea falling apart from idea, sensation dragging after it sensation down the crumbling staircase of the brain, which are the symptoms of the brain's loss of self-control:

> C'est là que j'ai bâti mon âme,
> —Dites, serai-je seul avec mon âme?—
> Mon âme hélas! maison d'ébène,
> Où s'est fendu, sans bruit, un soir,
> Le grand miroir de mon espoir.
>
> Dites, serai-je seul avec mon âme,
> En ce nocturne et angoissant domaine?
> Serai-je seul avec mon orgueil noir,
> Assis en un fauteuil de haine?
> Serai-je seul, avec ma pâle hyperdulie,
> Pour Notre-Dame, la Folie?

In these poems of self-analysis, which is self-torture, there is something lacerating, and at the same time bewildering, which conveys to one the sense of all that is most solitary, picturesque, and poignant in the transformation of an intensely active and keen-sighted reason into a thing of conflicting visionary moods. At times, as in the remarkable study of London called "Les Villes," this fever of the brain looks around it, and becomes a flame of angry and tumultuous epithet, licking up and devouring what is most solid in exterior space. Again, as in "Les Lois" and "Les Nombres," it becomes meta-

physical, abstract, and law towers up into a visible palace, number flowers into a forest:

> "Je suis l'halluciné de la forêt des Nombres."

That art of presenting a thought like a picture, of which M. Verhaeren is so accomplished a master, has become more subtle than ever; and

> "ces tours de ronde de l'infini, le soir,
> Et ces courbes, et ces spirales,"

of for the most part menacing speculations in the void, take visible form before us, with a kind of hallucination, communicated to us from that (how far deliberate?) hallucination which has created them. Gradually, in "Les Apparus dans mes Chemins," in "Les Campagnes Hallucinées," in "Les Villages Illusoires," in "Les Villes Tentaculaires," the hallucinations become entirely external: it is now the country, the village, the town, that is to say, the whole organised world, that agonises among cloudy phantoms, and no longer a mere individual, abnormal brain. And so he has at once gained a certain relief from what had been felt to be too intimately a part of himself, and has also surrendered to a more profound, because a more extended, consciousness of human misery. Effacing himself, as he does, behind the great spectacle of the world, as he sees it, with his visionary eyes, in his own violent and lethargic country, he becomes a more hopeless part of that conspiracy of the earth against what man has built out of the earth, of what man has built out of the earth against the earth, which he sees developing silently among the grass and bricks. All these books are a sort of philosophy in symbols, symbols becom-

ing more and more definite: "Le Donneur de Mauvais Conseils," who drives up to the farm gate:

> "La vieille carriole en bois vert-pomine
> Qui l'emmena, on ne sait d'où,
> Une folle la garda avec son homme
> Aux carrefours des chemins mous.
> Le cheval paît l'herbe d'automne,
> Près d'une mare monotone,
> Dont l'eau malade réverbère
> Le soir de pluie et de misère
> Qui tombe en loques sur la terre";

"Les Cordiers," the old man spinning his rope against the sky, weaving the past into the future:

> "Sur la route muette et régulière,
> Les yeux fixés vers la lumière
> Qui frôle en se couchant les clos et les maisons,
> Le blanc cordier visionnaire,
> Du fond du soir auréolaire,
> Attire à lui les horizons";

and, finally, the many-tentacled towns, drawing to themselves all the strength and sap of the earth: "Les Spectacles," "La Bourse," "Le Bazar," the monstrous and material soul of towns.

Contrast these poems with those early poems, so brutal, so Flemish, if you would see at a glance all the difference between the Naturalistic and the Symbolistic treatment. The subject-matter is the same; the same eye sees; there are the same

> "vers bâtis comme une estrade
> Pour la danse des mots et leurs belles parades."

But at first there is merely an eye that sees, and that takes the visible world at its own valuation of itself. Later on, things are seen but to be re-adjusted, to be set into relation

with other, invisible realities, of which they are no more than the wavering and tortured reflection. And with this poet, in his later manner, everything becomes symbol; the shop, the theatre, the bank, no less than the old rope-maker weaving the horizons together. And, inseparable from symbol, ideas, primary ideas, come into the work more and more effectually.

> "Sur la Ville, d'où les affres flamboient,
> Regnent, sans qu'on les voie,
> Mais évidentes, les idées :"

as he can write, on the last page of "Les Villes Tentaculaires," which points directly to "Les Aubes," in which a sort of deliverance through ideas, as you may see, is worked out.

And now I have to explain what I have tried to do in my translation of this play. From "Les Flambeaux Noirs" onwards, all M. Verhaeren's poems have been in *vers libre*, but a verse very much firmer in rhythm, very much more regular in accentuation, than the *vers libre* of most French writers of the present day. "Les Aubes" is written in a mixture of prose and verse, which, in France, is a very novel experiment indeed. To English readers, accustomed to the Elizabethan drama, nothing can seem more natural than such an alternation, marking the rise and fall of emotion and solemnity in the speakers. I have translated M. Verhaeren's verse very literally, and I have followed all his rhythms with great exactitude. But, for the most part, I have used unrhymed in place of rhymed verse, reserving rhyme for the speeches of the Seer, which are in a more definitely stanzaic form in the original, and for the *ronde* on pp. 97, 98. It seemed to me

that this was the best way of conveying M. Verhaeren's form into English; and, having finished my translation, I wrote to him, telling him exactly what I had done. He replied: "Si le vers français sans rime existait, je l'aurais employé moi-même. Seulement le vers blanc français ne me dit rien. En anglais ce doit être mon souhait. Je vous approuve donc entièrement."

ARTHUR SYMONS.

THE DAWN

PERSONS OF THE DRAMA

THE CROWD.
GROUPS: WORKMEN, BEGGARS, FARMERS, SOLDIERS, WOMEN, YOUNG MEN AND WOMEN, PASSERS, BOYS, OLD MEN.
JACQUES HÉRÉNIEN, *tribune.*
PIERRE HÉRÉNIEN, *his father.*
CLAIRE, *his wife.*
GEORGES, *his son.*
HAINEAU, *brother of Claire.*
HORDAIN, *captain of the enemy, disciple of Hérenien.*
OLD GHISLAIN, *farmer.*
THE CURÉ.
AN OFFICER.
AN EMISSARY.
A GIPSY.
A CONSUL *of Oppidomagne.*
THE SHEPHERD.
THE BEGGAR BENOIT.
THE SEER *of the Villages.*
THE SEER *of the Cities.*

The groups act as a single person of multiple and contradictory aspects.

ACT I

Scene I

An immense open space into which converge, on the right, the roads descending from Oppidomagne; on the left, the paths rising from the plains. Lines of trees accompany them as far as the eye can see. The enemy has surrounded the town. The country is on fire. Great flaring lights in the distance; the tocsin sounds.

Groups of beggars fill the trenches. Others, standing on gravel-heaps, scan the distance, and cry to one another.

THE BEGGARS.

—Look, from this mound you can see the villages all on fire.

—Climb the trees: we can see better.

[*A beggar, clinging to a tree.*

—This way! this way!

BEGGARS (*looking towards the town*).

—The flames are getting brighter and bigger, towards the town.

—The powder-mills are blowing up.

[*The sound of firing and explosions.*

The works at the port are on fire, and the quays, and the docks. The petroleum-sheds have caught fire.

Yards and masts burn black, and make crosses against the sky!

BEGGARS (*looking towards the plains*).

—The country is all red, over the plains. The fire has got hold of Hérénien's farm: they are throwing the furniture into the street, pell mell. They are bringing the beasts out of the stable with covered heads. They are carrying out the old sick father on his great bed.

—It is the farmer's turn now to have death on his heels.

—Ah! what a fine, quick vengeance! They are cast out themselves, they who cast us out. The crowd of them heaps the highways. All our curses have carried; all our blasphemies, all our prayers. all our angers!

—See there, the cattle flying to the fens,
The stallions rear and snap the trace in two,
And snort against this woeful torch;
And one has fled, with burning at his heels
And death upon his flying mane,
He turns his head about, and bites the flame
That eats upon his neck;
Look all of you, and see the hands
Of madmen piling up the flame with pitchforks.

—The bells madden in the wind. Churches and towers crumble. God Himself might have fear.

—Who knows why this war was unchained?

—All the kings desire Oppidomagne. They desire it to the ends of the earth.

[*People rush up excitedly, and disappear confusedly in every direction. Some stop, and cry:*

—The farmers are piling up their furniture and their clothes on waggons; they are coming towards the town; they will pass here.

THE GROUP OF BEGGARS.

—This is the moment to make for Oppidomagne.
—Follow them.

THE BEGGAR BENOIT.

Follow them? And of what race are *you*, then?
Since you and I have been revolters, vagabonds,
Yes, you and I, all of us, all the time,
Have not these farming, homestead folk
Bent us and broken us with aching poverty?
They, they have been the bread,
And we, we have so sorely been the hunger,
That the sharp flames which eat
Their bursting granaries now
Seem to me like our very teeth
And the malevolent tearing of our vehement nails!
Since I have come and gone, and come and gone, and come again,
Barring with evil luck
The gates at which I beg,
My hands have spread the sickness that they breed,
My hands have rooted up their dead,
Have stolen their dead, my aged hands
Have gagged their daughters, and have ravished them;
I hate them as a man may hate
The evillest thing upon the earth;
And now at least let them be bashed
With their own pikes and their own poles.

AN OLD MAN.

What is the good of bashing them? They will do no more harm; they are more wretched than we are.

THE BEGGAR BENOIT.

Be silent, you are too old to be a man any longer.

[*Fresh bands hurry along the Oppidomagne road. A group of workmen appears. One of them speaks to the beggars.*

THE WORKMAN.

Has Hérénien passed yet?

A BEGGAR (*to the workman*).

The shepherd knows him. Ask him.

THE WORKMAN (*to the shepherd*).

Has Hérénien passed here?

THE SHEPHERD (*in rags*).

I am waiting for him. He has gone to look after his father. I want to see him again. I cured him when he was a child.

THE WORKMAN.

He is sure to come. We will wait for him together.

THE SHEPHERD.

How has he left the city? His enemies themselves ought to have kept him there.

THE WORKMAN.

Hérénien does what he likes. His father was dying at the village, and called him.

THE SHEPHERD.

Do you think he will conquer Oppidomagne?

THE WORKMAN.

Is he not the master of the people?
He is that wonderful and sacred thing
That lives, beyond the shadow of this hour,
Already in the future, which he touches;
None better have discerned than he
How much of folly mixed with how much wisdom waits
To bring the new to-morrows in;
His clear books cast a light on all we think about.
'Tis there we other mortals learn
What is the way that leads to good
And what exalts a man, at such an hour, to be a God.

THE SHEPHERD.

You are one of those who love and defend him in the city.

THE WORKMAN.

Hundreds we are, thousands we are
Who worship him, and follow him,
No matter where he goes, unto the very end.

[*The workman goes on ahead, to watch for Hérénien. More people in flight, then a group of peasants dragging after them carts and hand-carts. The horses have climbed the hill, with heavy loads.*

OLD GHISLAIN.

Our beasts are tired out. Let them get wind again. Hallo, there, you beggars, has that scoundrel Hérénien passed this way?

THE BEGGAR BENOIT.

Old Ghislain, be silent.

OLD GHISLAIN.

Be silent! be silent! why? who for? Hérénien is one of you then?

THE BEGGAR BENOIT.

Old Ghislain, we are the power here, and we can strike you down, before you have so much time as to cry murder. If, for all these years and these years, you have thrown to us at your doors the refuse of your pigs and the washings of your kitchen, we too, for all these years and these years, have we not given you our prayers and our *aves*? We are quits for the past, and the present is ours.

[*He advances towards Father Ghislain menacingly.*

A PEASANT (*running up*).

Old Ghislain, Old Ghislain, your farm, "Tinkling Meadow," has spread the fire to the whole of "Wolf Plain."

The trees are burning, on the roads,
And the whole fir-wood snorts
And cries and howls aloud,
And all the flames spire up,
Up to the clouds,
And the flames bite the very sky!

OLD GHISLAIN.

Well, and what then? and what has that to do with me?
Let all the plain and all the woods begone,
And let the wind, the air, and the sky burn,
And let the earth itself break as a pebble breaks.
[*With a change of tone.*
Just now this beggar talked of killing me.
[*To the beggar Benoit.*
Well, do it, then; be quick with you!
Here are my hands, here are my arms, that I have sold
For a vain labour; here too is my obstinate brain;
Here is my skin withered in all its pores,
Here is my back, here are the rags of me,
The ruin that I drag about
All the long years, all the long years!
Truly I ask myself, why is it that I live?
I dig a field the frost will reap,
I farm the meadows that are evil-starred;
All that my father hoarded up, farthing by farthing, all
That he had squeezed, and hid, and burrowed, like a miser,
I have lost all, eaten it all.
I have implored my sons: they have devoured me;
They have been swallowed up in the unfruitful town,
They have preferred a life unfruitful, infamous;
Hamlets and little towns are dead;
Oppidomagne has sapped the strength of them,
Oppidomagne has drained the blood of them;
And now, behold
In every acre and in every close
Branching abroad the several maladies
Of water and of earth and air and sun!

A PEASANT.

Your sorrows are ours. We are all equally wretched.

OLD GHISLAIN.

When I was but a child, we feasted sowing-time,
The soil was kindly then to folk and to horned beasts,
The flax came up like happiness in flower.
But now, but now men fear the earth.
And surely needs must something have been violated,
Some sacred and some obscure thing;
Now 'tis the coal that all belongs to, kept,
Once, in the covering night.
The netted rails, upon the plains bestarred
With golden signals, swarm;
Trains graze the meadow-lands, and pierce the banks;
The living skies are eaten up with piercing smoke;
The grass bleeds, and the virgin herb, harvest itself,
Feed on the sulphur's poisonous breath.
'Tis now
That, terrible in victory, come forth
Iron, and lead, and fire;
And hell itself comes forth with them!

[*The beggars recoil, and cease to threaten.*

A BEGGAR.

Poor man!

OLD GHISLAIN.

Poor man! But no!

[*Drawing towards him a peasant, and pointing to an enclosure which is burning.*

You think, do you, that it was the enemy set fire to my

enclosure? Undeceive yourselves. [*Showing his hands.*] It was these two hands.

And my woods by "Firefly Pond"? These hands again. And my granaries and my ricks? These always. No, no, Old Ghislain isn't a poor man. It is he, he only perhaps, who sees clear. We don't respect our fields; we lose patience with the slow and sure of things; we kill the germs; we overheat them; we arrange, we reason, we contrive. The earth isn't a wife now; it's a kept woman!

And now, see how the enemy annihilates it!
Where it was wounded by the town,
'Tis burnt by war, the torch of war;
Where the wise man had wellnigh drained it dry,
The bullets fire it now.
Alas, alas, this is the death of it!
There is no need of rain or dewfall now,
There is no need of snow about the mountain's head,
Nor yet of sun, nor of months clear and sweet,
And it were better at one stroke
To end, ending the country-side.

A PEASANT.

Truly, Old Ghislain is not sound in his head.

ANOTHER.

It is a crime to blaspheme the earth.

ANOTHER.

We do not know what to believe.

[*The village Seer appears; he hums, imitating by his gestures the flight of the fiery crows.*

THE SEER.

The forests fly and the meadow flows,
And the storm puts ruddy fingers forth
In crosses to the south and north.
It is the hour of the Fiery Crows.

They swoop on house and they sweep on hedge,
With frantic claws and wings stretched wide,
And with their burning plumes they fledge
The shifting skies on every side.

So swift they wing from banks and briars
Their unreturning passage out,
They seem the messengers of the fires
That ring the whole round world about.

Terror attends without a sound
The mystery of their silent flight;
Their beaks are sharp to rend the ground,
And savage there to ravage there
The very heart of earth from our delight.

The seeds we sow, ere we have sown them, die,
The hayricks, with their leaping flames that wing
Their flying way towards the sunsetting,
Seem, in the smoke that whirls them high,
Like wild and bloody horses galloping.

This is the hour that was foretold.
Ho, bells! ho, bells! the bells have tolled;
Toll for the death of harvest, and the death of all.
This is the hour that was foretold.
Ho, the death-bells! ho, the death-bells! the bells have tolled;
Toll the death-bells for the world's funeral.

OLD GHISLAIN.

Ah well, it is he who is in the right, the seer, the madman, he, whom we all mocked, whom I mocked myself, and whom I have never understood. Ah, the formidable light is there now.

[*He points to the horizon.*

But he knew it long ago. And we were there, all of us, with an old hope, with our old illusions, putting the poor little bar of our common-sense between the spokes of the terrible wheels of destiny.

[*A troop of young folks from the villages, farm labourers, workmen, stable-maids, beggars, carry forward Pierre Hérénien on a litter. A priest accompanies them. The dying man signs to them that he suffers too much, and that they must stop.*

JACQUES HÉRÉNIEN.

Here, my friends. Set him down gently.

[*Helping those who carry him. Then, as if speaking to himself:*

Poor old man, poor old man! who could not die in his bed, like his father! Oh, these wars, these wars, they must be hated with a diamond-like hatred.

PIERRE HÉRÉNIEN.

Hérénien, Hérénien!

JACQUES HÉRÉNIEN.

Here I am, father, close to you, close to your hands and your eyes; close to you, as in the old times, as in mother's times, so close, that I can hear your heart

beat. Do you see me? do you hear me? Do you feel that it is I, and that I love you always?

PIERRE HÉRÉNIEN (*breathing heavily*).

This time, it is the end. You will not be able to carry me to your home, in Oppidomagne. I am happy because the plains are all about me. I have one favour to ask of you, that you do not forbid the old curé to come to me.

JACQUES HÉRÉNIEN.

My father, you shall be obeyed in every will and wish. Shall I go further off?

PIERRE HÉRÉNIEN.

I must be alone to confess.

[*Hérénien goes aside. The priest approaches. Old Ghislain accosts the tribune timidly. He speaks to him during the confession.*

OLD GHISLAIN.

Monsieur Hérénien, I see you are always good. I thought otherwise. You rule Oppidomagne, and in our farms we talk of you. My sons defend you. Perhaps they are right. But tell me, now that the country is dead, how are we going to live? Where shall we find a corner to sow the seed, and grow the corn? Where shall we find an acre that the smoke and the sewers and the poisons and the war have not spoilt? tell me, tell me!

[*Hérénien remains silent. His whole attention is given to his father. He merely shrugs his shoulders slightly when Old Ghislain has done speaking.*

THE SHEPHERD (*who has slowly approached Hérénien*).

Jacques, do you remember me?

JACQUES HÉRÉNIEN.

What! you are still alive, old shepherd?

[*Embraces him with great emotion.*

THE SHEPHERD.

I went a great way off, yonder, for years; I have seen new and marvellous countries. One wanders on like that, from day to day, from moor to moor, and one gets back in time to see someone die!

PIERRE HÉRÉNIEN.

I ask pardon of all whom I have offended.

THE CURÉ.

Do not be troubled, you were a christian, you will be saved. [*The priest absolves him.*

JACQUES HÉRÉNIEN (*leading the shepherd up to the dying man*).

Father, this is the shepherd; you know him well, the shepherd of "Tinkling Meadow," the oldest of your servants and of your friends.

PIERRE HÉRÉNIEN.

[*Looking for a long time at the shepherd, and then, all of a sudden, recognising him, seizing his arm, and drawing him towards him. In almost a firm voice:*

When I am dead, shepherd, destroy all the old seeds,

They are full of evil germs; they are rotten; they are mouldy. It is not with them that the soil shall have its espousals. And you, who have been everywhere, you shall sow new seed in my fields and in my meadows; living seed, fresh seed, good seed that you have seen and found good, yonder, in the virgin countries of the earth.

[*A pause. The shepherd bows his head and kneels. The beggars and the porters do the same.*

And now turn me to the sun.

[*He is obeyed; but in the west, where the sun is then going down, the burning villages illuminate the country. The heat reaches to the dying man.*

A PEASANT (*pointing to Pierre Hérénien*).

The shadow of the fire passes over his face.

ANOTHER.

He turns to the fire.

ANOTHER (*to those about Pierre Hérénien*).

Take care, take care, he must not see the flames.

ANOTHER.

Turn him to the right.

ANOTHER.

This way, this way, to the right, to the right.

[*But the old man clings to the litter, and raises himself, his face towards the setting sun and the fires.*

ANOTHER.

Poor man! if he knew!

PIERRE HÉRÉNIEN (*in a scarcely audible voice*).

Jacques Hérénien, come close to me, close. Let me die touching you with my fingers (*he caresses him*), and looking that way with my eyes at what I have loved most in the world. I have loved you to distraction; I have never denied you; I have almost blessed the sorrows that you have given me; and, while I have loved you, I have loved the earth. I have lived with the sun, as with God; it was the visible master of things. It would have been like a punishment if I had died in the night, in its absence. Happily, it is there before me, and I reach out my arms to it. (*He lifts himself towards the conflagration.*) I can see it no longer, but I still feel the good, conquering light.

JACQUES HÉRÉNIEN *murmurs:*

Father! father!

[*not knowing whether he should disabuse his father, or see in these words a sudden prediction.*

PIERRE HÉRÉNIEN.

I feel it, I love it, I understand; it is from there, now, that the only springtides now possible must come!

[*He falls back, and dies: Jacques Hérénien embraces his father, pressing his lips on his mouth as if he would gather the first truth that has ever left them.*

JACQUES HÉRÉNIEN.

Did he know what he was saying? "The only springtides now possible!"

[*Slowly Hérénien returns to himself out of his reverie. The beggars, peasants, and workmen*

surround him. The shepherd holds his hands and draws him close. The porters raise the body and move onward. At this moment a troop of women and children coming from the city turn into the open space from the upper roads. It is led by old men.

AN OLD MAN (*stopping and pointing to Pierre Hérénien*).

A dead man! and Hérénien following the bier!

ANOTHER.

And this crowd?

ANOTHER.

It is the whole country-side flocking towards Oppidomagne.

ANOTHER.

Do they suppose they will be welcome there?

[*He calls:*

Hérénien! Hérénien!

HÉRÉNIEN.

Who calls me?

THE OLD MAN.

Oppidomagne has shut itself in within its walls; it will not permit the plain to send it its vagabonds and its dead!

HÉRÉNIEN.

I am returning home; I have lost my father; I wish to bury him myself, and withdraw him from pillage and profanation.

THE OLD MAN.

They will drive you back with bullets, they are turning out all who do not help in the defences.

ANOTHER OLD MAN.

They are blowing up the bridges. The ramparts are bristling with troops.

ANOTHER.

The city no longer knows whom it casts out. No one will recognise you.

ANOTHER.

It is mad to go that way.

ANOTHER.

It is risking your life.

ANOTHER (*entreatingly*).

Stay with us, among us. You will save us.

HÉRÉNIEN.

I swear to you that I will enter Oppidomagne. If you doubt, follow me.

AN OLD MAN.

We cannot.

A PEASANT.

Better die in our own homes.

[*The beggars, the old men, and some peasants remain. The rest follow Hérénien. The funeral train disappears slowly.*

AN OLD MAN.

Hérénien is the only man still firm and stable, in these hours of suspended thunder. Perhaps, after all, they will welcome him.

ANOTHER.

As for those who follow him, they will all be killed.

ANOTHER (*turning towards the country*).

Look yonder; the enemy teaches the elements to make war. He encircles them, deploys them, masters them, throws them forward.

ANOTHER.

And the country once dead, they will destroy the cities.

AN OLD MAN OF THE TOWNS (*older than the others*).

O these cities! these cities!
And their tumults and their outcries
And their wild furies and their insolent attitudes
Against the brotherhood of men;
O these cities! and their wrath against the skies,
And their most terrible, most bestial, show,
And their stocked market of old sins,
And their vile shops,
Where wreathe, in knots of golden grapes,
All the unclean desires,
As, on a time, garlands of flowery breasts
Wreathed the white bodies of Diana's maids!
These cities!
The sense of youth is withered up in them;
The sense of heroism is sapped in them;
The sense of justice, as a useless thing, is cast away from them.
O these cities! these cities!
That spread themselves abroad like heaps of rottenness,
Like soft or vehement breeds of slime

Whose mouths and suckers wait to suck
The noble blood of all the world!

A PEASANT (*to the old men*).

Without you, the people of cities, our harvests would flourish, our barns would run over with corn! Without you, we should still be strong, healthy, and tranquil; without you, our daughters would not be prostitutes, nor our sons soldiers. You have soiled us with your ideas and with your vices, and it is you who let loose war upon us.

ONE FROM THE TOWNS (*to the peasants*).

It is of you that we should complain. Why do you flock in, so many and so greedy? From your fields you hasten to us to traffic with us, to steal from us, and with so stubborn a mind, so narrow, so bitter, and so violent a soul, that you are scarcely to be distinguished from bandits. You have set your malice and your thievishness behind all our counters. You have cumbered little by little all the desks of the world. If the age grinds its teeth with a great noise of meddling and servile pens, it is your millions of hands that were willing to copy till death.

ONE FROM THE VILLAGES.

You had need of us. You filled our plains with your appeals.

ONE FROM THE TOWNS.

You are the dough that mediocrity kneads, the regiments that nullity numbers. You are the cause of slow usury, idleness, and sluggishness. Without you, the

city would still be nervous, light, valiant; without you, surprise, vivacity, daring might have come back again. Without you, slumber would not have paralysed life, nor death soaked space with blood.

AN OLD MAN.

Eh, but say now, do you think the enemy is waiting all this time, with folded arms, until you have settled your disputes? If our city perishes, certainly we might swathe it in a shroud woven of all the needless words, of all the meaningless discussions, of all the loquacity and eloquence, lavished upon it for centuries. The talkers are the only guilty ones.

ANOTHER.

Everything has conspired against Oppidomagne. There are a thousand causes which ruin it, as there are a thousand worms that attack a corpse. Happily there is always some Christ, far off, on the horizon.

ANOTHER.

Yesterday, the gravest insurrection terrified the city. The people took refuge in the cemetery, which overlooks the old quarters. The tombs served for ramparts. They are on strike. The Regent's soldiers surround it and cut it off.

A PEASANT.

Oppidomagne is besieged, then, and besieging.

THE OLD MAN.

As they did at Rome, the crowd has made an Aventine.

ANOTHER.

O the foul shame of being one of this degraded race,
Whose mortal and whose trumpeting wantonness
Affrights the very reason of the earth.
Now in these hours of thunder in the air,
Instead of setting to,
Now at the last, to seek for strength out of the common strength,
It falls apart, it spreads abroad, it drops away.
Say, is there then no longer some unwavering light,
Is there no longer then an axiom of aught,
Is there no longer a strong hand with us
To scourge the wandering flock of these soft wills of ours?
Say, is there then a man no more?

[*The village Seer, who has never ceased roaming to and fro, prophesies:*

THE SEER.

The times which were to come have come at last,
Wherein the city, long the mirror of all eyes,
The marvellous mirror that had glassed
The eyes of the world,
Scatters the glory of its memories.

Oppidomagne!
With thy quays, columns, bridges, thy triumphal arch,
Behold against thy pride
The whole horizons march!

Oppidomagne!
With thy towers, monuments, belfries, far and wide,
Behold in blood of fire written upon thy walls
The sign and seal of funerals!

Oppidomagne! Now is the hour
When all things fixed shall crumble into sand,
Unless without delay,
This day,
Some mighty one puts forth his hand!

AN OLD MAN.

Oh, whoever he is, how we shall all shout for him, and how we shall be the first to bow down to him!

THE SEER.

This one that we await
Shall be so great,
That needs must all you rise to him, maybe
If you would know that this indeed is he.

AN OLD MAN.

He is not yet born.

ANOTHER.

No one can guess him.

ANOTHER.

No one proclaims him.

ANOTHER.

And Jacques Hérénien?

ANOTHER.

Jacques Hérénien? He is mad!

Scene II

As the curtain rises, a cordon of horse soldiers bars the gate to Oppidomagne. The soldiers are at work undermining the bridges across the river. Patrols mount guard on the slope and the ramparts. A general, field-glass in hand, inspects the horizon. He watches what is going on, while a messenger runs up, handing an order to the officer in command of the cavalry.

The Officer (*reading*).

"Orders are given to admit no one into the city; except the tribune Jacques Hérénien. It is important that he should realise the favour that is shown him. He is to be opposed as a matter of form.

(Signed) The Regency of Oppidomagne."

[*Hérénien appears on the main road, followed by the crowd of ragged men, women, workmen, farmers, and old men. Finding that entry will be difficult, he advances by himself to the officer.*

Hérénien.

I am of those who must be heard. Oppidomagne is the city where I have grown up, suffered, fought for my ideas, which are the greatest that a man can bear about with him. I loved Oppidomagne when it seemed invincible. To-day I desire my place among those who die for her. And I desire the like for all those who are here, for all whom I have met with on the way. It is I who have called them to follow me. I have turned back towards courage the flood that was going down to cowardice.

THE OFFICER.

I know who you are, but I cannot alter the orders I have received.

HÉRÉNIEN.

What are the orders?

THE OFFICER.

To keep that barrier shut.

[*He points to the gate of the city.*

HÉRÉNIEN.

Then it must be that this Oppidomagne,
At the tremendous hour
When mountainous woe and terror fall upon its pride,
With the mere poor and little words of a command
Shuts to its gates,
Shuts from its door
Those that are bringing it
Their blood, their hearts,
And the most vehement flame of all their loves!
I, who so oft at night-time, at the harbour-side,
Have seen the seas
Press on and cast abroad in it
The formidable and free universe,
Even I who love her, be she evil or good,
I who so strangely love, I who so blindly love,
That I am as a son, yet passionate as a lover,
I must go forth from her, and like a hunted beast!
An order! But it is such orders that ruin a people. Do you reckon up the number of defenders when the sorrow is infinite? Do you separate for death those

that the same danger unites? I insist that you make room for all.

THE OFFICER.

Impossible.

[*Hérénien goes up to the corpse of his father, and uncovers his head and shoulders.*

HÉRÉNIEN.

For twenty years this man there was a soldier;
He served your leaders over the whole earth,
He has fought at the poles, in the desert, and on the sea;
Thrice he has crossed Europe from end to end
In a tempestuous cloud
Of frantic flags and golden eagles and great lights!
Is it to him you close the gates of Oppidomagne?

THE OFFICER.

To all who are with you.

HÉRÉNIEN.

Know, then, that it is in the name of the clearest, simplest, most unvarying law that I appeal to your honour as a man. In a few days this plain will be ruin, putrefaction, and blood. You have a mere word to say, and all our lives, to which we all have a right, will be saved. The help that men owe to men, you who bear arms, you first of all owe to us. This duty wipes out all others. There was a time when the very name of army and of watchword was unknown.

THE OFFICER.

Disperse, disperse.

HÉRÉNIEN.

[*He looks towards the vast crowd which follows him, reckons up the number of the soldiers with a glance, and goes up to his dead father.*

I ask the pardon of this dead man for desecrating his funeral with blood.

[*At this moment the general, who observes the scene from the height of the rampart, approaches the officer.*

HÉRÉNIEN (*to the crowd*).

I have used all means, there remains but one. You all know it. We are a thousand, and these, but a few. (*Pointing to the soldiers.*) Some among them have fathers and children among you. They are ours; they will let us pass. Let the women come forward: they will not fire on them.

[*Advancing alone, while the crowd forms in order. To the soldiers:*

He who commands you bids you commit a crime. Disobey him. The right is yours.

[*Already the general has rejoined the officer, and reprimands him. The words "stupidity" and "folly" are heard. The general advances rapidly towards Hérénien and salutes him.*

THE GENERAL.

Jacques Hérénien, enter Oppidomagne. The Regency bids you welcome.

HÉRÉNIEN.

At last! I knew that you had need of me, and that it is in your interest that I come into your midst.

[*Pointing to the crowd.*

And all these follow me; the old men, the children, the women, they shall all return home, they will all be useful. And you, my father, you shall rest in the tomb where my two children sleep already.

[*The general makes no objection. The ranks open. Jacques Hérénien and some workmen enter the city, but no sooner have they passed than suddenly, at the officer's command, the ranks close. The body of Pierre Hérénien, the porters, the old men, the peasants, the women and the children are thrust back. Fresh battalions hastening up lend their aid. Jacques Hérénien, astonished, turns to make his way back. He is heard to cry: "Cowardice," "Treason," "Infamy." But the tumult covers his voice. He is violently hurried into the city. And the howling crowd is driven back into the plain.*

ACT II

Scene I

Hérénien's house. Door to right; commonplace furniture; stove at back. Things lying about pell-mell. On the table, clothes that are being mended, children's toys. Heaps of books on the chairs. Claire, Hérénien's wife, finishes lighting the lamps. She waits. All at once there is a noise of cheering in the street. Hérénien enters. He clasps his wife in a long embrace.

Hérénien.

We have buried my father to the left of the little ones, under the yew-tree which overlooks our burial-place.

He will rest there as he did in the village; his body will mingle with the elementary life of the herbs and plants that he loved so much.

CLAIRE.

Did they spy on you?

[*During this scene Hérénien changes his black clothes for indoor things. Impression of home.*

HÉRÉNIEN.

I don't know. There were only a few of us. On the way back, we passed the crowd; newsboys were calling the news of the Aventine. Everybody made for the papers. Some men carried torches and sang. Along the boulevards and avenues houses lay open, split or pierced by the bombs. The rubbish was all over the pavements. Not a single gas-lamp was lighted. At the National Place a quarry-man called my name: that was all. When they allowed me to bring my father into Oppidomagne — after God knows what difficulties!—I promised that he should be buried without any crowd of people. I have kept my word.

[*Finding a roll of bank-notes on the writing-desk:*

What is this?

CLAIRE.

They have sent the remainder of the account.

[*Taking a note out of her pocket.*

Look. Your last book has been read everywhere.

HÉRÉNIEN (*looking at the letter*).

They must read and discuss me; they must hunger and thirst after my justice!

[*He puts the letter on the table, and opens the window. Going nearer to Claire.*

I thought of us, during that simple and homely funeral. I would like to have felt you by my side, when the coffin sank into the earth! My heart was so tortured, so full of pent-up tenderness, so walled up within myself. Why had I not your hands in mine, to mark there the half of my mourning!

[*He takes her hand.*

You are indeed my sweet and valiant one. You know me, you understand me, before you alone I dare be without compunction what I truly am: a poor human being, seldom calm, full of vehement pride and tenderness, the more exacting because I love the more. Where is the boy?

CLAIRE (*points to the room at the right*).

In our room, asleep.

HÉRÉNIEN.

How often I drove my father to despair! My fits and starts of will were so wild that he used to beat me, and I cried out under his blows, and shrieked, and yelled at him all the same just what I pleased. And now to-day I would strangle my son if he were to irritate me.

[*A shell bursts not far from the house. Hérénien and Claire rush to the window. The crowd applauds Hérénien.*

This, now, is the best time to love. There is nothing like these crises and alarms for bringing people closer together. I seem to see you in the first months of our love; you seem to me even more beautiful; I bring you my love just as sincere, just as ardent, just as absolute as ever.

CLAIRE.

And I love and serve you with all my soul.

HÉRÉNIEN.

This funeral (in which some part of myself has gone, I know not what, a part of my life, my childhood) tore me away from my burning existence, given up to all, taken by all, scattered wide, far from you, far from us, all through Oppidomagne. I seemed to myself to be in the village, in the desolate land of the visionary plains; prowling, at night, on the heath, or astride of the wild colts in my father's fields. I remembered the shepherds, the servants, the maid-servants. I remembered the way to school, to church, and the exact sound of the parish bell. I was so sad and so happy; I longed to see you again, you and the child. [*Putting his arm round Claire.* And now, let me see your eyes, your pale, sweet eyes, that love me more than all others, and are the fairest lights in the world. [*Leaning his face over Claire.* Are they not faithful, and tender, and peaceful, and shining, and am I not foolish to make them weep sometimes?

CLAIRE.

Your words go further than your thoughts, when they are unkind.

HÉRÉNIEN.

Oh! I am not one of those who love tamely. But you, you love me all the same, although you know my terrible life, my real life, my real reason of being on the earth.

CLAIRE (*with a slight tone of reproach*).

You talk to me of that so often!

HÉRÉNIEN.

And I will talk of it to you again; I will be brutal, and weary you, because it is my passion to be absolutely sincere with you. You would be my wife no longer, if I had to hide anything from you. I would rather see you weep than lie to you.

CLAIRE.

If you were otherwise, I should love you the less.

HÉRÉNIEN.

And besides, you know very well that I exaggerate; that really, when I assign you so small a space in my life, I deceive myself and you.

CLAIRE.

Ah, be what you will, tormentor or despot, what does it matter? You belong to me, you and our child, to all my love.

HÉRÉNIEN.

Ah, you indeed are my wife!
When, on a night of June,
Long ago now, sweetly you gave me your soul,
Did I not swear that my lips
Never again should kiss
Another's lips,
Another's breast?
You were the flower of all the lakes and mists
That my impetuous hands

Have wrested from my haggard country
And planted in the heart of Oppidomagne;
And 'tis the soil, the waters, and the meadow-lands,
That I behold and worship in your naked eyes.
And shall not we remain, hand in hand, heart to heart,
Lost in the love that sets us free,
Adoringly, forgivingly, exultingly,
While the insatiable days eat up the time
Our fates shall let us live?
Death like a fire enrings us round about,
Night is an ambush set, and evening a disaster;
And see, in the insensate skies,
The stars hurtle together and consume,
And the hot fiery ashes fall!

[*Hérénien's child comes in to embrace his father, who hardly notices and seems to have forgotten him. The crowd goes by, with vociferous shouting. Hérénien rushes to the window. Shouts are heard. "The Exchange is on fire!" "The Arsenal is on fire!" "The Port is on fire!" The reflection of the flames illuminates the room.*

HÉRÉNIEN.

And what if this indeed ended Oppidomagne!
And if these bonfires emptied from their mountain-tops
The smoking blood of sacrifice?
Oppidomagne
Has gathered to its codes and ratified in laws
All that was once a hidden crime, a crafty murder,
Deceit or theft against true justice and true good.
And now that it is puffed and sated with its vices,
And drunk enough to drink the very dregs

That foul its gutters to the brim,
All the dull evils, all the muddy lusts,
Hang at its girdle, night and day,
And drain its breasts, like hungering wolves.
If then these palaces, these sheds,
If these bright arsenals, if these gloomy temples, fall,
Crumble to shameful dust,
The world will shout to see the red sparks fly,
To meet the future half way, on the wind.
But that the city itself should have an end,
Being the soul of future things,
That these should sink under the waves of flame;
That the tied bundle of our fates
She in her hands yet holds,
Break in the furious feeble hands,
Break now, and break in face of death;
That the fair gardens of to-morrow
Whose gates she opened wide
Be wasted with the thunderbolt,
And cumbered with dead things;
It is impossible: he is mad who says it.
Oppidomagne, with all her happy hopes,
With all her beacons triumphing in the night,
Shall stand, shall stand erect,
As long as any men, whose faith is like my faith,
Have blood in them to shed, that faith bear fruit in them,
And that the blind and greedy world at length
Be fashioned to the will of the new gods!

CLAIRE.

Oh! the terrors and the sorrows that we shall have to endure!

HÉRÉNIEN.

Whatever they may be, I forbid you to complain of them. We live in formidable days of terrors, agonies, and new births. The unknown becomes the master. Men shake with an immense movement of the head the weight of all the errors of ages. Utopia resigns its wings, and takes root in the earth. Our very besiegers know of it.

CLAIRE.

Had you any news of the enemy this morning?

HÉRÉNIEN.

Not yet; but what the captain, Hordain, predicted yesterday, gave me fire and flame for weeks and weeks. This captain belongs to the race of men who realise the impossible. Think! he and I, to kill the war dead, here, before the discharged and powerless chiefs! To bring about the public reconciliation of the foreign soldiers and ours! To exhaust all the forces of one's being, all the energies of one's faith, for that supreme end! What a splendid dream!

CLAIRE (*gently ironical*).

What a delusion!

HÉRÉNIEN.

We should never reject a hope when it spreads such wings. What remains improbable to-day, will be accomplished fact to-morrow. Hordain relies so far only on dim surmisings, a deep but stifled discontent, secret understandings and unions. The

troops refuse to fight; they are tired out; they disband. Ideas of justice are in the air. There is vague talk of concord; the spark is set to the grate. I await the breath of wind that shall set the wood and straw alight.

[*Hérénien listens to the murmurs in the street. There is a knock at the door. The Consul of Oppidomagne enters the room.*

THE CONSUL.

Jacques Hérénien, I come to you in the name of the Regency of Oppidomagne, to ask you to accomplish a great duty. Far as our ideas are from one another, an understanding between us is certain, when it is a question of saving the city. I seem to speak to the future leader of this people that we love in different ways, but both of us ardently.

HÉRÉNIEN.

Preambles are useless. I ask what brings you, and what you expect of me.

[*He motions to the Consul to sit down.*

THE CONSUL.

Up yonder, at the cemetery, the situation of your friends is lamentable. They would not resist a serious attack; yesterday the Regency was anxious to bring them to order; but they seem to be numerous, young, hardy; they are needed for the defence of Oppidomagne. Up to now, they were scarcely rebels; they are disaffected, on strike: that is all. To-morrow, when they have seen the terrible con-

flagrations that are spreading yonder, perhaps they will in turn become incendiaries. Hate counsels folly, and if they slay and pillage, it will not indeed be the end of things, but it will be an end in shame.

HÉRÉNIEN.

I hold war in execration. This between men of the same soil terrifies me more than any other. You, in Oppidomagne, have moved heaven and earth to bring it about. You have cultivated the misery of the people; you have refused it bread, justice, dignity; you have tyrannised it in its body and in its thought; you have helped yourselves with its ignorance, as with your disloyalty, your cleverness, your lying, your irony, and your contempt. You are unworthy and culpable.

THE CONSUL.

I believed you to have a more balanced, a more unclouded, and a loftier judgment.

HÉRÉNIEN.

I think and judge before you, as I would think and judge before the enemy. I hate, but pity you.

THE CONSUL (*rising*).

This is an outrage.

HÉRÉNIEN.

It is passion and frankness.

THE CONSUL.

It is above all injustice.

HÉRÉNIEN.

Come now! But shall I ever end if I begin to show you the anger of the cities and the dread of the country?

My memory is faithful: it is armed
With those remembrances that shall cut deep as sickles.
It reckons up the murders you and yours have done,
It knows the soul you bear, and it defies you
To be but honest, loyal, just,
Or, without vice, strong in your strength.
But I forget myself to thus instruct you,
Knowing that you will turn again
To weave your spiders' webs of twisted perfidy.
Treachery is a sacred thing
For all of you: it holds you, hunts you, binds you up
Within a monstrous and most fatal forfeiture.

THE CONSUL.

You have then no confidence?

HÉRÉNIEN.

None.

THE CONSUL.

Then, I retire. [*The Consul rises to leave.*

HÉRÉNIEN.

I wait. . . .

[*The Consul hesitates, takes two steps, and changes his mind.*

THE CONSUL.

Come, it would be folly to let our words get the better of our deeds. Oppidomagne alone should occupy us.

HÉRÉNIEN.

I had no other thought when I received you here.

THE CONSUL.

A man of affairs and intelligence, such as you are, knows better than anyone how we have spread abroad the name and influence of Oppidomagne.

Its history is the history of its Regents
And of its Consuls, who, 'neath skies of flaming gold,
Across red soil that lighted up with blood,
Unto the end of the world,
Drew after them its host with their magnetic hand.
Our troubles, in these times, were many and were fruitful.
The people and its leaders both
Were rivals in the battle-field. And those,
Yonder, who threaten and lay siege to us,
Know what a crimson and triumphant fluttering,
Once, our insatiate flags,
Flung to the winds upon their plains of snow.
Oppidomagne is splendid in the eyes of all,
Oppidomagne is vaster than the memory
The sea and earth and wind and sun have kept of it;
Crime, and the noble deeds of war, divide its glory;
You only see, you only speak, its crimes.

HÉRÉNIEN.

Your glory is all ended, it has stooped to earth;
With its illustrious sword itself has slain the right;
To-day another glory comes about,
Another rises in my breast,
Perfect and strong and virginal of stain.

And this glory is made up of the new and profound justice, of private heroism, of ardent tenacity, of necessary and temporary violence. It is less brilliant

than yours, but surer. The whole world awaits it. Both of us, you with fear and I with fervour, feel it to be inevitable and imminent. That is why you come to me; that is why I have the temerity to treat you as though you were already conquered. Do what you will, you and your caste, you are, at this moment, the prisoners of my consent or my refusal.

THE CONSUL.

You mistake. . . .

HÉRÉNIEN.

No! Like me, you know well that you can do nothing without my aid. In my hands, I hold all the deep moral force of Oppidomagne.

THE CONSUL.

You forget what the ruin of an empire would mean. All the ancient interests, all the customs of ages, sustain it. And we have with us the army.

HÉRÉNIEN.

The army? say rather, the chiefs; for the soldiers hesitate or protest. They are on the eve of joining the people. They are my hope and your fear. If they all obeyed you, if you did not fear an immense insurrection, the people and the soldiers together, you would have already bombarded the Aventine.

[*A silence.*

Well, you come to ask me, do you not, to go up yonder, to the mountain, among the tombs, and enjoin on those oppressed people to come down into the midst of those who have enslaved them. Oh! I see all the danger and the peril of my mission!

THE CONSUL.

You are mistaken. The Regency begs you to announce that the hour has come when perils are so great as to overcome all rancour. Whoever believes in Oppidomagne should turn hero. Our people has unknown possibilities of regeneration.

HÉRÉNIEN.

How would they be treated if they came down from up yonder?

THE CONSUL.

The soldiers should return to their proper rank in the army, the others should return to their homes and families. If poverty, since they have left, has crept in, it shall be banished. For the rest, promise what you will: you are loyal. We have confidence in you.

HÉRÉNIEN.

Will you sign that for me?

THE CONSUL.

It is done. [*Hands him a written paper.*
Read. [*Hérénien goes over it and appears satisfied.*

HÉRÉNIEN.

One last word. When I brought after me the farmers of the villages, the old men and vagabonds of the cities, why were they driven back from the walls, towards the enemy?

THE CONSUL.

It was an error. You should have been listened to.

HÉRÉNIEN.

And who allowed me to bury my father among his own folk?

THE CONSUL.

I myself.

HÉRÉNIEN.

Go then, and tell the Regency that I will go to the Aventine.

[*Hérénien goes to the window and cries to the people still standing in the street: "Let the man who comes out of my house pass without a murmur: he has done his duty. . . . To-night, at the cemetery, yonder!"*

SCENE II

At the Aventine (cemetery on a height). People assembled. Haineau occupies the tribune: a tomb higher than the others. Stacked arms are planted among the little funereal gardens. Crosses, small pillars, pedestals and columns emerge from among the flowers. On the wall surrounding it armed workmen are on guard. Night is coming on. Fires are lighted.

HAINEAU.

I conclude then, as I concluded yesterday: in a revolution it is essential to strike at ideas in the person of those who represent them. It is essential to go slowly, not to be carried away, and to make for immediate ends. Coldly, each of us will choose his man, his victim. No one shall lie down to rest until the three Regents and the two Consuls of Oppidomagne are dead. It is the work of terror that brings the work of safety.

THE CROWD.

—Why proclaim what should be kept quiet?
—Every man is master of his own knife.
—Silence!

HAINEAU.

The enemy burns the churches, the banks, the parliaments. The Capitol and the Regency remain. Let us destroy them. Let us go down by night, in bands, into Oppidomagne.

SOMEONE.

Impossible, the Aventine is surrounded.

HAINEAU.

Someone can always be bought over.

THE CROWD.

—What is the use of these massacres?
—One chief dies, and another takes his place.
—We should conquer the whole mass.

HAINEAU.

You must cut off his head if you would master the beast. Once upon a time, in Oppidomagne, when we protested among ourselves, who dreamed of half-measures? Then we used to admire those who swept away things and people. Banks and theatres were blown up, and fearless, unflinching, the admirable assassins of old ideas died; they seemed to the judges madmen, but to the people heroes. That was the time of ingenuous sacrifices, tragical decisions, swift executions. Contempt of life swept over

the universe. Now to-day everything is flabby and flaccid: energy is like an unstrung bow. We prevaricate, wait, reason, calculate; and you fear Oppidomagne conquered, though you dared it when it was conquering.

THE CROWD.

—We love it now that it is besieged.
—Our wives and children are there still.
—Our strike will come to nothing.
—Let us go back to Oppidomagne.

HAINEAU.

When you will anything, you must will it in spite of everything. The hour of the last anguish has come. What matter the sorrows and the sobs of our mothers if, thanks to our sufferings, new life is gained!

SOMEONE (*pointing to Haineau*).

He has no children!

HAINEAU.

If I had, I would sacrifice them for the future.

SOMEONE.

These are only words: you draw back when the time comes for action.

HAINEAU.

I have approved myself during the time of the revolt.

SOMEONE.

You hid yourself when they were killing the people.

HAINEAU.

If I had the thousand arms of a crowd, I would act alone, and I would disdain you. . . .

[*Hooting and jostling: Haineau is dislodged from the tribune.*

A GROUP IN THE CROWD.

—There goes another who won't make fools of us any more.

—He is too base and cowardly.

ANOTHER GROUP.

—We loathe him, now that we know ourselves better.

—We don't know what we want, now that we want it all together.

—If we don't do something we are lost.

—Let us go back to Oppidomagne.

[*The tumult quiets down. Le Breux mounts the tribune.*

LE BREUX.

Haineau let himself be carried away for nothing. He accused us of lacking daring. Is not our very presence on this mountain sufficient proof of heroism? At any moment we may be attacked and cut to pieces.

HAINEAU.

Take care; you will frighten them.

LE BREUX.

[*Shrugging his shoulders, glancing at Haineau, and continuing:*

We must not use up, on ourselves and among ourselves,

the hate that should strike only Oppidomagne. We have now been here together for a week, and already divisions, jealousies, spite, the hesitation of one, the folly of another, get the better of our mutual understanding, cemented though it was by God knows what promises! Happily, I have good news for you. The Regency authorises Hérénien to treat with us, here on the Aventine.

[*Showing a written paper.*

His letter brings me the announcement.

THE CROWD (*on all sides*).

—Hérénien will see clear. It is he who overcomes all our troubles.

—He knows what to do.

—He will give us back to ourselves.

AN OPPONENT.

Must he always be called on?

ANOTHER.

We abandon ourselves to him like women.

LE BREUX.

You tempt the people by speaking like that.

AN OPPONENT.

We open its eyes; we put it on its guard against itself.

LE BREUX.

The crowd adores Hérénien. It does not discuss its enthusiasms.

AN OPPONENT.

Hérénien is not a God. Why did he leave Oppidomagne on the night of the revolt?

LE BREUX.

His father was dying.

AN OPPONENT.

His leaving was a mask for his flight. Hérénien pays you to defend him.

LE BREUX.

If I was in his pay, you would have been in mine long ago. You have a little low soul which cannot understand a higher one than your own.

[*Acclamations.*

SOMEONE.

Let us wait for Hérénien.

A YOUNG MAN.

I will follow him, but I will kill him if he betrays us.

LE BREUX.

I answer for him, as you answer for yourself to yourself. We need Hérénien. We are sure of him. Look yonder. (*There is a movement near the gate of the cemetery.*) He is coming. It is only he who is strong enough to unite us and save us.

[*The crowd masses itself on the boundary wall. Long cheering. Hérénien mounts rapidly on a tomb, and speaks, keeping his eye on Haineau, who is in front of him.*

HÉRÉNIEN.

At last I am with you! You and I are only half alive, when we live apart. At the village where my father died I heard of your exodus to this mountain. I thought of Roman times, of the pride, the decisiveness, the courage, the beauty, of the supreme peoples. Let what may come of it, this dazzling and brutal act will have greatened you. You have proved your combined stubbornness and your single valour. Those that refuse to you, soldiers, your proper pay, to you, citizens, complete justice, because you were the claimants for it, are to-day checkmated. The means you have used were excellent. But will they remain so?

An armed conflict with Oppidomagne would be a disaster. Up to now it has been postponed. Up to now, you have remained bound together in an admirable bond of defence. I affirm, before you all, that you have been proud to live together, thanks to your clear and mutual good-will. You have realized that the future depended upon your attitude. That is well.

[*Silence. All heads are bowed.*

But will this union maintain itself, in the midst of the misery and the famine that will break out here?

[*General silence. Haineau shrugs his shoulders. Hérénien gathers that there has been a dispute. Suddenly changing his tone:*

You were, I admit, in terrible straits. From the height of this mountain of death, certainly, you dominated those whom you detested. But your hearths and homes were wanting; your wives were wanting, your sons, your daughters. The Regency

held them in its grasp, already impatient to crush them out. Ah! you have suffered the interminable passing of black hours, the long and slow procession of anguish after anguish through the soul! Happily all may be changed. The Regency offers you peace.

HAINEAU.

Never will we parley with the Regents.

HÉRÉNIEN.

If you refuse to parley, the massacre begins. What! we are a handful of enthusiasts here, whose action will decide the lot of a people; we are on the eve of an enormous victory for the people, and we consent to die like a rat in a trap. [*Cheers.*

HAINEAU.

Everything that comes from the Regency must be rejected without consideration.

HÉRÉNIEN.

Everything that it offers must be considered, and used for our own advantage. What matter the danger of the means! I am a man who would use the thunder itself! [*Cheers.*

HAINEAU.

We shall be your dupes.

HÉRÉNIEN.

What do you know of my designs, of my hopes, of my life? You disorganise: I organise. Those who listen to you waste themselves in defiances, in plots, in terrorisings. For a week now you have been

using your utmost rigour: you have achieved a nullity, mere disputes. I come and I find your work paltry. I am ashamed of it. [*Cheers.*

HAINEAU.

I will have no tyrant. [*Hooting.*

HÉRÉNIEN.

You would become one, if I let you. [*Cheers.*

HAINEAU.

You overturn the Regency only to usurp its place.

HÉRÉNIEN.

Its place! I might have taken it: I disdained it.
[*Cheers.*

HAINEAU.

You consent to the most dubious compromises, you traffic. . . .

HÉRÉNIEN.

Silence! Not a word more! This debate shall not descend to personal questions.
[*Addressing himself directly to the crowd:*
I hate the authorities to such a degree that I do not so much as dictate to you the conditions of peace. You yourselves shall impose them upon the Regency. Speak. [*Cheers.*

SOMEONE.

We want to be treated as men. We have used our rights in striking for them.

HÉRÉNIEN.

Perfect.

ANOTHER.

We want our goods to be restored to us.

HÉRÉNIEN.

Promised.

ANOTHER.

We want the arrears of wages to be paid to workmen.

HÉRÉNIEN.

The Regency agrees to it.

ANOTHER.

We want to re-enter the town under arms.

HÉRÉNIEN.

You may. And I add: if confiscations have taken place during your absence, they shall be annulled. All condemnations shall be forgotten. You yourselves shall be the judges of those who have judged you. [*Cheers.*

And now that we are in agreement, tell me: would it not have been monstrous that men of the same soil should have cut one another's throats? Think: yonder, in the feverous streets of the old quarters, in the atmosphere of powder and conflagration, disabled folk have taken refuge, in an immense hope of some renewal. More and more it is our programmes that they discuss, our discourses that they comment on, our soul that they drink in. The army itself is in a ferment with our dreams. Every discontent, every grudge, every injustice, every oppression, every enslavement, takes an unknown voice to

make itself heard! Our masters hate each other. They have no more strength. They obey a phantom.

[*Acquiescence from all sides.*

Among the enemy, the same confusion, the same weakness. Mutinies break out among the soldiers. There are revolts against the cruelty of chiefs, against the horrors and follies of the campaign. Storms of hatred arise. Sick of nameless dreads, distresses, and miseries, all long after the necessary union of man with man. They are ashamed to be butchers of their fellows. And now, if this conflagration of instincts could be extinguished; if our besiegers could be made to feel that they would find brotherly souls among us; if by a sudden understanding we might realise to-day a little of the great human dream, Oppidomagne would be forgiven for all its shame, its folly, its blasphemy; it would become the place in the world where one of the few sacred events had happened. It is with this thought that you must all follow me down, towards your children. [*Cheers.*

THE CROWD.

—He is the only one who makes things move.
—Without him, our cause was lost.

SOMEONE (*speaking directly to Hérénien*).

We will all obey you; you, you are our master.

[*Cheers. They hoist Hérénien on their shoulders, and carry him towards the city. Le Breux escorts him. All descend. Cries of triumph are heard.*

ACT III

SCENE I

A fortnight after.

Abode of Hérénien, the same as in the second act. The work-table, covered with papers, is near the window, in which panes are broken. In the streets, the crowd comes and goes, retires to a distance and returns; groups cry: "Down with the traitor!" "Death to the traitor!" "Death to him!" "Down with him!"

CLAIRE.

And now this has lasted for a fortnight! The house seems like a ship in distress. Billows of rage and shouting beat upon it. Oh! that accursed affair on the Aventine! To have fallen all of a sudden from the height of enthusiasm, into disgrace and hate! [*Haineau enters rapidly.*

CLAIRE.

You! here!

HAINEAU.

Yes, I.

CLAIRE.

What do you want?

HAINEAU.

You don't know then of my speech in the "Old Market"? I expected a better welcome.

CLAIRE (*pointing to Hérénien's room*).

What, you! his adversary and his enemy!

[*Pointing to the street.*

You who stir up those cries and uproars!

HAINEAU.

By this time, after what he must know, Hérénien will receive me better than you, my friend and my sister.

CLAIRE.

I do not understand.

HAINEAU.

You will understand soon. Meanwhile, tell me, what was he like during these days of vain and miserable rage?

CLAIRE.

Oh, do not think he is overcome! He is still splendidly erect; he is carrying out the boldest of projects: he will reconcile Oppidomagne with the enemy.

HAINEAU (*pointing to the street*).

But these uproars at his door?

CLAIRE.

At first, it was hard. It was useless for me to espouse his furies, envelop him with my fervour, wait upon him better than ever: he called up all his old grudges, he stirred himself up to anger, he rushed to the window, shook his fist at the city, shouted with rage, and the tears started from his eyes. In all his violence he was the terrible child that you know.

HAINEAU.

Ah! if he had only listened to me, we should never have fallen out. The Regency would not have deceived him. The people would love him still. But he is not to be disciplined; he has never known what it

is to will patiently. He goes by bounds and tempests, like the winds of his country.

CLAIRE.

And what ought he to have done?

HAINEAU.

Prolonged the revolt on the Aventine; extended it instead of reducing it, accepted the civic conflict, made the misery sharper; seized the banks by force; the public services by force; destiny, by force.

CLAIRE.

It was impossible.

HAINEAU.

Everything was possible, in the state of fever in which we were. But there had to be a plan, a resolution coldly taken and followed. First, we should have organised the resistance: we were on strike, up yonder; then the attack; then the massacre. It was the immediate, definite, urgent things that needed seeing to. Those in authority would have been assassinated: Regent and Consuls. They were beginning to listen to me. Hérénien came to the Aventine at an unlucky moment: circumstances were in his favour. He is the sentimental tribune in speaking, big gestures, big words: he magnetises, he does not convince. Ah! when I think of it, all my hatred comes back to me.

CLAIRE.

How you deceive yourself!

[*Clamours in the street. Haineau and Claire pay no heed to them.*

HAINEAU.

He seems not to know what he wants himself. He always looks beyond the hour. I never understand him.

CLAIRE.

I always understand him.

HAINEAU.

It is a mistake to put all his will into the service of certain dreams. He who blows down the tube too hard breaks the glass.

CLAIRE.

Don't let us discuss things. You are violent, and you feel that you are weak and ill at ease. If you are here, in his house, it is to ask for something. What is it?

HAINEAU (*with pride*).

I have come here to tell you that yesterday, I, I who am now speaking, overcame the crowd, defended Hérénien, made them cheer him. My tenacity has conquered his ill-luck.

CLAIRE.

You have done that, you? But how then does your conduct go with your ideas?

HAINEAU.

Ah, it is like this! When I act for myself, I am a failure, I am betrayed, I am hated, Le Breux supplants me; in short, Hérénien, in spite of all, is the only man who can save things, at the point they have reached. He has ravelled them, let him unravel them.

CLAIRE.

And you, you have sustained him?

HAINEAU.

Certainly, because we cannot have the revolt over again, because everything crumbles through my fingers, because I have no chance, no luck. If I could only tell you how childish the people are, and how they are already regretting that they have no master! Oh! it is all over, it is all over! and one ought to have the strength to disappear.

CLAIRE.

It is in despair then that you sustain my man?

HAINEAU.

What does it matter?

[*taking his hat and stick and preparing to go.*

Good-bye, you know now what you ought to know. When Hérénien comes down, prepare him to see me.

[*He goes out. Renewed tempest of howls and cries. Hérénien enters.*

CLAIRE (*pointing towards the crowd*).

People must be wicked when the best of them become savage so soon.

HÉRÉNIEN.

Come, have patience. I am as tenacious as the peasant my father. Yesterday, these cries pursued me through the whole house, they beat against the walls from top to bottom, from cellar to attic, everywhere, like alarm-bells. I felt a rage creeping over me, I would like

to have strangled them, stamped them to bits, annihilated them. I was in a fever of hate. I answered their nameless rages with insults. To-day, I feel quite firm. (*Unfolding a letter.*) Listen, this is what has been sent to me: "I can now give you a definite assurance. All the officers are now won over to our cause and will follow us: some out of spite, others out of envy, all out of disgust. We came to an understanding yesterday in a secret meeting. I hold them in my hand. They will obey me like the pen with which I write to you, like the man who carries you this letter. Through them the whole army is ours. The generals? They are too far off, too high; the soldiers are hardly aware of them: they may be overlooked." (*Folding the letter.*) And this letter comes to me from Hordain, the captain of the enemy.

[*Fresh outbreak of cries: "Death to him!" "Down with him!"*

CLAIRE.

My friend!

HÉRÉNIEN.

Well, let them cry on! As for that, I foresaw that the Regency, when it promised everything, when it gave up everything, kept the half up its sleeves, like the jugglers in fairs. It was the maddest thing to go to the Aventine! But I had to have the people, I had to have my people and its fervour, before I could make terms with the besiegers.

CLAIRE.

How reasonable you are now!

HÉRÉNIEN.

The Regency fooled me perfectly! Those vacuous and bedizened folk, measuring my ambition by their own, came here, to offer me a block of its ruined power: as if men like me did not conquer their own place, for themselves, in the sight of all. They went out of that door like beaten lackeys, and since then my loss has enfuriated them. They have only a few days more to live, and there is nothing but their rage for my downfall to keep their thoughts from their own death-agony. Ah! if the people knew! All the appearances are against me. I believed in a poor scrap of writing, a mere signature, scratched out with the same pen that set it down. The more the Regency has broken its promises, the more I seem to have broken mine. Really, they might believe me a guilty accomplice.

CLAIRE.

It is the people that is. You have only been able to deceive them because you were deceived yourself. The innocence of all you have done blinds them. Ah! I have my own idea. The masses are as suspicious, as malignant, as ungrateful, as stupid, as those who govern them. They will never admit that anyone can be simply pure and great.

HÉRÉNIEN.

I forbid you to think that.

CLAIRE.

You said it yourself yesterday.

HÉRÉNIEN.

Oh! I, that is different. [*Pause.*] The people loves me, and I love it, despite all, through all. What is happening now is only a lover's quarrel.

[*Insulting shouts in the street.*

CLAIRE.

They are there by their thousands insulting us. And those are the same mouths that cheered you! Ah! the cowards! the wretches! the madmen!

[*Renewed tempest of cries.*

HÉRÉNIEN.

Indeed, one might think they had never known me.

[*Going towards the window with clenched fists:*

Oh! those brutes! those brutes! those brutes!

[*Then, returning to his desk:*

And yet yesterday, at the meeting in the Old Market, they all cheered me. Haineau defended me with such fervour that I forgive him all. Le Breux came to me to-night with the most reassuring news. The duplicity of the Regents is becoming clearer and clearer. All Oppidomagne returns to its true master. My hour has come again. Has it not? (*impatiently*) Has it not, then?

CLAIRE.

There is good hope of it.

HÉRÉNIEN.

No, no, but there is certainty!
Despite these heady cries, despite their multitude,
I can divine already such a flock of hands

All bending to my strength, to me, to-morrow!
My past returns again, and fills their minds,
In a great flood of memories
And in a foam of glory. [*As if speaking to himself:*
I hold the future fast, in these two hands of mine:
Those who withstand,
And those who put their trust in me,
Deep in their conscience know it, all of them.
That noble dream which is made flesh in me,
Now more than ever, spurs me on to live;
These are the times and these the hours that fire my soul.
What are these cries to me, these clamours on the wind,
And these unterrifying storms?
Only the future, in my mind,
Far stronger and more real than the present, lives!

CLAIRE (*pointing to the street*).

If they could only see you, how they would be won by your confidence!

My friend, you make of me
The proudest woman on earth,
And I abase myself and lose myself in your great soul;
Take, take this kiss I give to you,
Take it, and bear it where you go,
As a clear shining weapon bear it!
There are few men upon the earth
That ever took
A deeper and a truer one than this!

HÉRÉNIEN.

If my own self were to forsake me, I should find myself again in you, my force has passed so into your heart!

But I am so unshaken in my destiny that nothing which is happening now seems to me real. I believe in surprise, chance, the unknown. (*Pointing to the street.*) Let them howl on! they are preparing their repentance.

[*The tumult grows greater. Blows are heard on the door below. Window-panes are smashed.*

HÉRÉNIEN.

If they go on knocking, I will open.

CLAIRE.

It would be mad.

HÉRÉNIEN.

There have been moments when my mere presence meant victory! Never have I repelled them, when they approached my threshold.

[*Hérénien thrusts aside Claire, who tries to stop him, rushes to the window, opens it, and plants himself there with his arms folded. The uproar becomes quieter, then stops, and there is silence. Suddenly, at a distance, other cries are heard: "Down with the Regency! Down with the firebrands! Long live Hérénien!"*

HÉRÉNIEN.

At last! There is the true people! The people that cheered me at the Old Market! My heart never deceived me. It heard when my ears were still deaf.

[*There is a swaying and jostling in the crowd, contradictory outcries, then, slowly, quietude.*

CLAIRE (*at the window*).

Le Breux is going to speak. Listen.

HÉRÉNIEN (*impatiently*).

I want to speak myself.

LE BREUX (*in the street*).

Hérénien was sincere and just. (*Murmurs.*) There are five hundred of you howling at him, and there is not one of you whom he has not helped. (*Murmurs.*) As for me, he extricated me from the very talons of the consular judges. Last year, he battled to deliver Haineau. And you, all of you? he saved you in the time of the tragic and famishing strikes, he. . . .

HÉRÉNIEN (*impatiently*).

I have no need of a defender.

[*addressing Le Breux, who speaks in the street.*

I must take the people: I must not have them given to me.

THE CROWD.

—Let him speak.
—Down with him! death to him! He is a traitor!
—Let him speak!
—Death to him! Down with him! He is bought!
—Silence! [*Quiet is restored.*

HAINEAU (*in the street*).

I, Charles Haineau, suspected Jacques Hérénien. He seemed to me a man to be doubted. Like you, I opposed him. To-day, I regret it.

THE CROWD (*contradictorily*).

Long live Hérénien! Death to him! Down with him!

HAINEAU.

The Regency sent emissaries amongst us: I surprised them yesterday at the meeting in the Old Market: they were urging other wretches to kill Jacques Hérénien, to pillage his house, to pretend that it was the vengeance of the people.

THE CROWD.

—Death to the Regents!
—Long live the people of Oppidomagne!
—Long live Hérénien!

HAINEAU.

We need Hérénien.

THE CROWD.

—Why did he receive dubious messages?
—Why did he leave our meetings?
—He is a despot.
—He is a martyr.
—Let him defend himself.
—Silence!
—May he forgive us!

HÉRÉNIEN.

Forgive you, yes: for a man such as I am is not doubted; for the Regency of Oppidomagne deceives as easily as I take breath. Bit by bit, the fine front of its authority is chipped away; rag by rag the fine cloak of its power falls from its shoulders. It called on me to sew together the pieces. It dispatched me

to the Aventine, with the design of monopolising or ruining me. The mission was difficult, dangerous, tempting. I acquitted myself of it as of a duty, and to-day I am neither lost to you nor gained by it; I am, and I remain, free; as always, I set my strength to serve my supreme idea. (*Some cheers.*) Just now I heard cries of "Bought! Bought!"

[*turning and seizing a bundle of papers on his desk.* "Bought!" What have they not done that I should not be! (*brandishing a roll of papers*). In this handful of letters they have promised me everything that infamy can abandon to an apostate, corruption to a traitor. That you may touch and handle the cynicism, the policy, the perfidy, the baseness, the blindness of the Regency, I hand over to you their letters. They were all accompanied by pressing demands, they were all the prologue of more ardent solicitations, all of them contain no more than the shadow of the infamies that came out in personal interviews. What they dared not write, they said; what they dared not endorse, they impressed; what they dared not formulate, they hinted. They returned to the attack, after each failure; they answered refusals by bigger offers. Finally, they gave up all pride. I needed but to have opened my hand, to seize the whole power, and personify, in my own person, all the past. Ah! truly I wonder at myself when I think with what violence this fist remained clenched.

And now for the letters, read them yourselves. (*He throws them to the crowd.*) Talk them over, share them amongst you, spread them to the four winds

of Oppidomagne. The immense ruin of the Regency is in them. You will understand all. As for me, I rest all my security on the insane imprudence of disarming myself; I am lost, for ever, willingly, joyously, in the eyes of the Consuls; I offer them the most unforgettable of insults and I take refuge in your justice. Henceforth, it is you who protect my life. [*Cries of enthusiasm.*

I may be attacked, on any side. Am I not the shining target, at which all the arrows are aimed?

Swear to me then,—no matter what the calumny that may be reported, no matter what the fable, foolish or looking like truth, that may be invented—swear to follow me, with eyes shut, but with assured heart. (*They swear, and cheer.*) It should be our joy and our pride to belong to one another, to hate, to love, and to think as one. [*Cheers.*

I will be your soul, and you my arms. And together we shall realise such splendid conquests of humanity, that seeing them, thanks to us, living and shining in their very eyes, men shall date time from the day of our victory.

[*Cheers; then calm; Hérénien adds:*

And now, I request Vincent Le Breux and Charles Haineau to join me here. I wish no faintest difference to exist between us.

[*Renewed cheers. Hérénien turns and goes up to Claire, who embraces him.*

You see now that we should never despair of the people. (*After a silence.*) Tell our emissary from Hordain to come here immediately.

[*Haineau and Le Breux enter. Claire goes out.*

LE BREUX.

This is victory!

HAINEAU.

Oh! you are really a master. When I fight against you I am without force; I am worth a thousand, when I am by your side.

HÉRÉNIEN.

Well, this time at least, our good old Regency seems finally stuck in its own mud. (*Sitting down.*) Despite all its promises and oaths, no help was given to the household of any of the revolters. It assigned our men to the most dangerous posts: manipulation of the powder and explosives. The enemy's bombs fell into their midst as they worked. Lists of suspected persons were drawn up: each of the military leaders had his own.

LE BREUX.

You must regret your action at the Aventine.

HÉRÉNIEN.

Come now! (*Turning sharply to Haineau.*) Do you know, Charles Haineau, what I planned out while you were urging these storms of revolt against me?

HAINEAU.

Master, believe that all that, my part in it . . .

HÉRÉNIEN.

Do not excuse yourself, do not interrupt; have I not forgotten everything? Yes, over the heads and the thousand arms of this now conquered outbreak,

I realised the boldest dream of my life, the one for which alone I exist. (*Rising suddenly.*) In less than three days the enemy will enter Oppidomagne peacefully and we shall welcome them.

HAINEAU.

It is impossible.

HÉRÉNIEN.

The Regent's men have never ceased tempting me. I have discussed patiently with them, questioning, illusioning them, asking for guarantees and confidences; giving them hope and taking it from them in turn, worming out all their secrets; opposing, to their senile tactics, my abruptness and my anger. I played with them audaciously, madly; and I know now, better than anyone, better especially than they themselves, how inevitable and how close is their ruin. Their treasury? Empty. Their munition? Exhausted. Their garners? Ransacked. No more bread for the siege; no more money for the defence. They are asking in what waste, what orgies, fortunes and public supplies have disappeared. Everyone accuses everybody.

The army? The day before yesterday five battalions refused to march. The ring-leaders were condemned to death. They were led to the place of execution: not a soldier would fire upon them: they are alive yet. [*Cheers in the street: "Long live Hérénien!"* At the council, the Consuls squabble. Does one propose a plan? his neighbour opposes it, details his own, and wants that to be adopted. A week since, the ministers decided on a general sortie by the Gate of

Rome; they succeeded in getting it voted: not a Consul would put himself at the head of the troops.

Each Regent has sent me his emissary: these old men are not even agreed between themselves. They are like poor caged screech-owls, whose perches are turned round. They lose their heads, cry out, and close their eyes against the fire of day. They cast at one another the stupidities, faults, and crimes, for which they are afraid to take the responsibility. "What is to be done?" becomes the motto of their reign.

CLAIRE (*entering*).

The emissary has come.

HÉRÉNIEN.

Let him come in. (*Turning towards Haineau and Le Breux.*) I have shown you the situation as it is among us in the city; you shall judge of what it is like among the enemy. Then you will see that war is no longer possible.

[*Presenting the emissary to Le Breux and Haineau.* Here is one I am sure of. He knows, more than any of us, as to the state of mind of both armies. (*To the emissary.*) Tell them what you have discovered.

[*Hérénien walks to and fro in the room.*

THE EMISSARY.

Last Tuesday night my brother was sent to reconnoitre at the outposts. He went on a long way, to find out if the intrenchment that we had bombarded had given way, and would give us the chance of a general sortie from the Gate of Rome.

HÉRÉNIEN (*interrupting*).

That is the sortie I told you of.

THE EMISSARY (*continuing*).

All at once, in the dark, a voice calls out, but gently, as if afraid of frightening him and driving him away. A few quick, friendly words are exchanged. He is asked if there are not really in Oppidomagne responsible men who have had enough of the war.

HÉRÉNIEN (*quickly*).

That happened two days ago, and since then there have been many similar colloquies.

THE EMISSARY.

My brother answers that Oppidomagne will defend itself, that the revolt against this mutual slaughter must come, not from the conquered, but from the conquerors. And other soldiers come up, and say the besiegers are tired out, that deserters are endless, that rebellions are breaking out every day, that there is no longer an army, that they will have to raise the siege, if the frightful epidemic which decimates the troops continues. They want the union of all the miseries against all the powers.

HÉRÉNIEN.

Well, who then, after such an affirmation of human solidarity, would dare affirm that the conscience of men remains unchanged ?

O these first trembling confidences that come
By night, between the perilous dark

And the terrors of war and its despair;
These first confessions of the true soul of man,
Lucid at last and triumphing,
The passionless stars
On high must rejoice to hear them!

HAINEAU.

Truly, I admire you! At the tiniest glimmer that reaches you through the crack of a door, you are certain of the immense presence of the sun. Since Oppidomagne was blockaded, has a day passed, a single day, without traps being laid for you? Who guarantees you the sincerity of the soldiers? Who tells you that Oppidomagne will open its walls, even to unarmed enemies? You believe everything, like a blind man. The force that animates you is as insensate as it is ardent!

HÉRÉNIEN.

It is the only true one: be in the service of circumstances, hold oneself at the mercy of the immense hope that thrills through the whole world to-day!

HAINEAU.

You believe then that the enemy will abdicate its victory, and accept peace without profit?

HÉRÉNIEN.

You reason without knowledge. The vagabonds and the peasants, who at the beginning of the siege were driven back into the country, and who live, God knows how, between the besiegers and us, have given me tidings day by day. Hordain confirms

what they have said, and I have checked everything. The bombardment was bound to cease. The epidemic devours the camp: twenty thousand men are dead; the moats of the entrenchment overflow with corpses. A general was killed yesterday by a soldier, who had suddenly gone mad. The lower ranks league together to destroy the works of the siege: they spike the cannon, they throw balls and powder into the river. It is thus universal misery, distress, sorrows, tears, rages, terrors, that bring about these hopes of fellowship, these deep and fraternal cries. The very force of things is in accord with ours.

LE BREUX.

You are wonderful! You were thought to be overcome, and now you are preparing for a more gigantic enterprise than ever.

HÉRÉNIEN.

It is because I have faith, a faith capable of communicating itself to the whole world. I see myself, I feel myself, I multiply myself, in others; I assimilate them to me. The army of Oppidomagne is in my hands; that of the enemy obeys Hordain, my disciple and my fanatic. We have both worked with enthusiasm. Of what use is ancient wisdom, prudent, systematic, buried in books? It forms part of the humanity of yesterday; mine dates from to-day. (*To the emissary.*)

Go and tell those who will be at the outposts this evening that I shall be with them. You will give notice to Hordain.

[*Cheers in the street. The soldier goes out.*

HÉRÉNIEN (*to Haineau and Le Breux*).

Will you come with me? Come, tell me quickly.

LE BREUX.

Assuredly.

HÉRÉNIEN (*to Haineau*).

And you?

HAINEAU.

As long as the leaders live, they may do harm. As long as they have arms, they will kill. They will be the reaction which will follow your victory. Suppress them first.

HÉRÉNIEN.

They will be the past, powerless and annihilated. Come, will you go with me?

HAINEAU.

No.

HÉRÉNIEN.

Good, we will do great things without you.

[*Renewed cheering in the street. Hérénien leans out of the window, and is cheered.*

LE BREUX (*to Haineau*).

He always astonishes me. He sees the obstacle, as you and I do. On what prodigies does he rely to overcome it? And how he carries one along in the whirlwind of his tempest!

HAINEAU.

That man has on his side the unknown forces of life. (*After a pause.*) I shall go with him, after all.

Scene II

Ruined house. Night, at the outposts. On one side, rising ground and entrenchments; on the other, the distant walls of Oppidomagne, faintly lit up. Le Breux is sitting on a heap of stones; before him an officer of the enemy, and some soldiers. Silent groups arrive.

Le Breux.

In Oppidomagne, regents, judges, leading men, all are at the mercy of the people. They are unconscious of the imminence of their defeat, and imagine that they still govern. But what Hérénien wishes will come to pass.

The Officer.

Among us, no one dares punish any more. All the links that bound us to our leaders and to our kings have been snapped. We, the inferiors and the poor, are the masters. To think that after twenty months of campaigning, after taking six provinces, and ten strongholds, we should collapse before your disorganised capital!

Le Breux.

Will Hordain come?

The Officer.

I expect him.

Le Breux.

I am curious to see him. I do not know him.

The Officer.

He is fifty, he is a mere captain. It was during the dull

and stormy winters of our country of ice, in the grey and snowy boredom of a little garrison town, that he won me over to his will and to his faith. He would sit down, at night, at my chimney corner, under my lamp; and we would argue. The works of Hérénien had enlightened him; they were my light. Hordain explained them to me, commented on them, with a conviction so profound, that nothing seemed to me more self-evident in human thought and justice. Ah! those friendly and ardent evenings together! You will never know, you people of Oppidomagne, what miracles can be wrought by a book on the grave, unsatisfied and profound souls of a country of shadow and solitude!

[*Hordain and Hérénien arrive almost at the same moment, from opposite directions; they are accompanied by officers and soldiers.*

HORDAIN.

I come to you, proud to know you. There is not an idea which we do not share.

HÉRÉNIEN.

I knew by your letters that I could put all my trust in you. Both of us have our lives at stake, both of us love one another for the sake of the same profound and magnificent idea;

And what then if they call us traitors?
Never have we beheld our souls
More proud, more firm, more masters
Of all the future. We stand here,
Hardy and clear, and face to face;

Do we not bring two nations peace?
Do we not work at good with our rebellious hands?
And conscience cries to us: Well done!

HORDAIN.

Truly, my soul is more peaceful than on a battle-eve! All the words that justify this understanding between us have been said centuries ago.

HÉRÉNIEN.

If it were miracles we wanted, they would rise on every hand. The air we breathe, the horizons we behold, the fever that beats in our foreheads, the great burning of which each of us is but a flame, foretell the new justice.

HORDAIN.

My propaganda was incessant. First, absolutely secret. Then, the general watchfulness was relaxed to such a point that my prudence became a mere luxury. Since the Marshal Hardenz, the only real leader we had, fell into disgrace, our army exists no longer. Without understanding anything definite, our soldiers gather what is in the air. An order! and they would all go towards Oppidomagne, happy, confiding, and fraternal. A number of the dead generals were replaced by captains, of whom some are ours. It is only the very old leaders who seem to me impossible to win over. They would be a danger, if we did not act without delay, sharply, tomorrow.

HAINEAU.

How tomorrow? But time to prepare . . .

HÉRÉNIEN.

We must act like a thunder-clap.

HAINEAU.

But still, it is urgent that Oppidomagne should know what we want.

HÉRÉNIEN.

She guesses it. Tomorrow, she shall know it.

HAINEAU.

But it is impossible to move thousands of men, to throw open the gates of a city, without taking measures and assuring ourselves of every chance of success.

HÉRÉNIEN.

All the measures are taken; all the chances are in my hand. You alone hesitate and tremble; you have no faith, you are afraid to believe.

HORDAIN.

This then is what I propose: tomorrow, as soon as it becomes dark, at seven o'clock, those who are here and all our friends give orders to their men to march peacefully towards Oppidomagne. At that moment, all the leaders who remain to us will be assembled to feast their first victory. My brother, with three battalions which are ours, will mount guard over their debauch. The movement of troops will start from the east, and go in the direction both of the gate of Rome and of Babylon: it will reach them in an hour.

HÉRÉNIEN.

The gate of Rome is too near the Palace and the Regency.

The first part of the troops must enter by the gate of Babylon, and spread through the quarters of the people. Ah! you will see what our people are like, how they will receive you, cheer for you, breathe into you a stormy and courageous soul. You will pass on your way two barracks, the soldiers of which will join yours; and you will be in the heart of the city while the Regency is still deaf and sleeping.

Only then will you present yourselves at the gate of Rome. The consternation of our masters and their partisans will be in your favour. Only the five hundred consular guards will remain faithful to them. All the other troops lodged in the Palace will receive you with enthusiasm. If there is any fighting between the guards and us, leave our men to settle the affair. Keep out of any sort of quarrel. You need not fire a single shot.

HORDAIN.

We will do scrupulously what you tell us to do.

HÉRÉNIEN.

It is only you, the conquerors, who could realise our dream. Revolutions always begin by the renunciation of a privilege: you renounce victory.

AN OFFICER.

It was only our King who wanted war.

HAINEAU.

Ah, and truly your attack was unjust, your beginning of the campaign . . .

HORDAIN (*interrupting*).

For the last time, let us have things quite clear. My brother will look after the leaders. At eight o'clock three thousand men will enter by the gate of Babylon. Then the gate of Rome opens to let in more battalions. No trumpets, no flags, not a shot fired, no singing. The entry will be sudden, peaceful, and silent. Is that it?

HÉRÉNIEN.

Perfect; we will see to the rest. Oppidomagne is ready; she awaits you. In an hour you will have the whole city yours.

And now, let us separate; do not leave time for objections to come forward, they are weakening, enervating. Our sole tactics shall be: sudden, and bold! Till to-morrow, then, yonder!

[*They shake hands and separate. Hordain and Hérénien embrace.*

ACT IV

SCENE I

Abode of Hérénien. Same as in first and second acts. The child is playing. Claire stands anxiously at the window.

THE CHILD.

What dress shall I put on Polichinelle?

CLAIRE.

The prettiest.

THE CHILD.

Is it a holiday?

CLAIRE.

The finest holiday of all.

THE CHILD.

Is it Christmas?

CLAIRE.

It is Easter, the real Easter: the first there has ever been in the world.

THE CHILD.

May I go, if it is a holiday?

CLAIRE.

It is a holiday for grown-up people; a holiday that children don't understand.

THE CHILD.

Tell me what it is.

CLAIRE.

You will know, one day. You can say then that it is your father, your own father, who made it.

THE CHILD.

Will there be lots of flags?

CLAIRE.

Lots.

THE CHILD.

Then why do you say I should not understand? When there are flags, I always understand.

CLAIRE (*from the window*).

At last!

Hérénien enters with clothes in disorder. Claire rushes towards him.

HÉRÉNIEN (*embracing her feverishly*).

You know all?

CLAIRE.

I guess, without knowing. Tell me.

HÉRÉNIEN.

Things never happen as one imagines they are going to. I was convinced that none of our chiefs would be at the Gate of Babylon: they never are. Yesterday evening, the oldest of them went there. When they saw the enemy at hand, they thought it was an act of sheer madness. It was not an attack: the order of the troops, the absence of commanders, the lack of organisation, proved it. It was not parleyers: there were too many.

When the troops were a hundred yards away, some threw away their arms, others raised the butt ends of their muskets. Without a word, some of our men ran and opened the gates. Our chiefs struggled, shouted, stormed, all together: no one listened to their abuse nor to their orders. All the presentiments they had had, all the fears of defection, of treason, which they dared not admit, must have stabbed and tortured and prostrated them. In a lightning-flash, they understood all. They were surrounded. Three of them were killed: they were brave men. They saw the enemy enter Oppidomagne; they believed

it meant defeat, the shame of the last humiliation. Some wept. Our men flung themselves into the arms of the besiegers. There was hand-shaking, embracing. A sudden joy flashed through the souls of all. Swords, knapsacks, cartridges were thrown away. The enemy, whose wine-skins were full, offered drink. And the flood, always bigger and bigger, flows on towards the city and the National Square; our chiefs stand there, pale, mute, incredulous. "It is the end of the war," cried Le Breux, in the ear of a commander. "There is neither victory nor defeat: it is holiday." Thereupon the brute began to swear, mad with rage, striking out blindly with his sabre, wounding his horse. Two of his neighbours fled in the midst of the confusion. They went in the direction of the Regency: they will organise perhaps a semblance of resistance, and the consular guard will second them. I have already seen their green uniforms roving about near here.

CLAIRE.

But the generals of the enemy?

HÉRÉNIEN.

Oh! they are the prisoners of their own army. Yesterday, seeing the troops reduced to half by sickness and desertion, they wanted, in their last despair, to make a great assault. The soldiers refused to advance; some of them fired on their leaders. That ended everything.

CLAIRE.

I have heard the troops pouring into Oppidomagne; it is

like the sound of the sea. Never was I at once so happy and so trembling.

HÉRÉNIEN.

Twenty thousand men are now in our midst. Tables are set up in the squares. All those who, during the siege, had hidden away victuals in their cellars, distribute them to the people. Haineau said: "Never will Oppidomagne abase itself to the point of receiving its enemies; never will Oppidomagne permit them to walk about its streets and squares; never will the prejudices of humiliated Oppidomagne be effaced." One reasons in that way in normal times: but to-day!

There is such a confusion in accepted ideas that one could found new religions and proclaim new beliefs. Look, up there, on the heights, the Capitol is in flames! They are burning down the palaces of the Artillery and of the Navy. Before to-night, all the reserves of arms and ammunitions will have been served out.

During the siege, justice made for itself banks and exchanges. The hour of doing justice to the fundamental injustice, war, has come in its turn. Only with it will the others disappear too: the hate of the country for the city, of poverty for gold, of distress for power. The organisation of evil has been struck to the heart. (*Hurrahs are heard in the street*). Listen: it is the universal human holiday, wild and shouting.

[*Claire and Hérénien go towards the window, and meet in a long embrace. All at once Hérénien disengages himself sharply.*

HÉRÉNIEN.

Dress the child; I came to look for him, so that he might see my work.

CLAIRE.

The child? But he will not understand.

HÉRÉNIEN.

Dress him all the same; I shall say to him, in the presence of a world's death, words that he will never forget. Dress him, that I may take him with me.

CLAIRE.

And I?

HÉRÉNIEN.

Your brother Haineau will come for you.

CLAIRE.

Why can't we all go together?

HÉRÉNIEN.

Dress the child, I tell you, and be quick.

[*Claire goes out. Hérénien looks over his desk, puts some papers in his pocket, then leans from the window, and harangues the people.*

HÉRÉNIEN.

O bitter, shining, and rebellious life
That I have lived and suffered, how it seems
A rest and light and glory to me now!
I feel myself the greater by this conquered world,
Drawn from the depths to light, by these mere human hands.

Doubtless it was decreed, a farmer of the plains
Should first be born to give me being, me,
That hugely, with these fingers and these hands of mine,
And with these teeth of mine, should grip the throat of
the law,
And bring to ground the ancient pride of bloody powers!
The countryside, from farm to farm, from hut to hut,
Died. In the cities where I came
The universal will
Had fallen on such a depth
Of moral carnage: theft, and lechery, and gold,
Howled at each other and crushed each other, thronged
In monstrous hordes of mutual murderous violences.
All the old instincts killed each other, in the narrow lists
Of the pot house or the counting-house.
The formidable and accomplice government
Drew for its nourishment and for its bane
The sap of life from those most filthy dunghills,
And swelled with rotten fulness and content.
I was the lightning shining at the window
Where certain stood to watch the portents of the sky;
And, less by any skill or any plans of mine
Than by some unknown wild supremacy of love
For the whole wide world, I know not from my very self,
I burst the bolts that held
The brotherhood of man
In prison-walls.
The old Oppidomagne I have cast under me—
Charters, abuses, favours, dogmas, memories—
And see her now arise, the future city of man,
Forged by the thunderbolt, and wholly mine,
Who gaze and see the fire of my immortal thought

And my unconquered folly and ardour realised
Shine and become the light in the fixed eyes of fate!
[*Shots are heard.*

CLAIRE (*from her room*).

Hérénien, the Regent's soldiers are coming into the street.

HÉRÉNIEN (*not hearing, continues*).

I have made the world again in my own image,
I have lifted up the people and their fruitful powers
Out of the night of instinct to the vast
And clear and radiant threshold of my pride.

CLAIRE (*re-entering*).

Hérénien! Hérénien! Armed men are watching the house.
They will kill you, if you go out.

HÉRÉNIEN.

Come, come! Dress the child. [*Renewed firing.*

CLAIRE.

The shots are coming nearer to the square.

HÉRÉNIEN.

Dress the child.

CLAIRE.

They are spying on you; they are waiting for you; they want to take your life. . . .

HÉRÉNIEN.

Dress the child.

[*She goes to fetch the child, who trembles, takes it in her arms, and protects it.*

CLAIRE.

My friend, I beg of you, do not venture out; wait till they have passed.

HÉRÉNIEN.

I have no time to wait. To-day I have no fear, either of others or of myself. I have risen to that point of human strength.

CLAIRE.

Go then by yourself, and leave me the child.

HÉRÉNIEN (*with violence*).

I want the child. I want him there, by my side.

CLAIRE.

He shall come soon. Haineau will bring him to you.

HÉRÉNIEN.

He must be cheered with his father. Give him to me, come, give him to me.

CLAIRE.

I have never resisted you. I obey you always, like a slave, but to-day, I entreat you. . . .

HÉRÉNIEN.

Give him to me, I tell you.

[*He tears the child from the arms of Claire, thrusts her back, and rushes out with him.*

CLAIRE.

My friend! my friend! Oh! that madness! Always his poor, colossal madness!

[*An immediate sound of firing arrests her. After a moment of frantic anguish, she runs to the window, and leans out, crying:*

My son! my son!

[*Then she rushes into the street. Noise of horses galloping away. Tumult. Clamours. A silence. Then, dominating all the others:*

A VOICE.

Jacques Hérénien is assassinated!

SCENE II

MORNING. The Place of the People, laid out entirely in terraces. In the background is seen the panorama of Oppidomagne, veiled in the smoke of conflagration. To the right, the statue of the Regency, in full view, on a platform. To the left, the Palace of War is burning. Townspeople deck the windows with flags; drunken men pass. Wild dances cross the scene; bands succeed bands. Songs are heard on all sides. Boys throw stones at the statue of the Regency.

A BEGGAR.

Now then, ragamuffins, look out, you'll have your ears pulled.

THE BOYS.

—We are throwing stones at the Regency, because it's dead.

—(*throwing a stone*). Here goes for the sceptre.

—Here goes for the crown.

BANDS (*surrounding the statue and singing catches*).

And count by four and count by three:
The men of mettle, who are they?
They who reject the soldier's pay,

To wrest their rights wherever wrongs may be,
And win their way to liberty.

And count by three and count by two:
The men of mettle, who are they?
They are the men whose hearts are gay
When cities of gold and fire and fever brew
The cup of the wrath of God for you.

And count by two and count by one:
The men of mettle, who are they?
They who with one hand's hammer bray
To dust the dusty hopes and powers that shun
The light of their chief, the light of the sun.

A Peasant.

Hang me if I ever thought to see Oppidomagne again!

Group of Beggars.

—I hid myself in a hole, like a beast.
—I took turns in serving both parties. The Oppidomagne people called me the mole: I let them into all the projects of the enemy; and the enemy thought me as subtle as smoke: I kept them posted in the goings on at Oppidomagne.
—We did the same. I worked north.
—And I, west.
—By betraying the both of them, we have ended by settling their differences (*ironically*). We have made peace.

A Gipsy.

Isn't there always a moment when what is called crime becomes virtue?

A BEGGAR.

Is it true Hérénien is dead?

THE GIPSY.

He! he is master and king now. People don't die when they are so great as that.

A BEGGAR.

They killed him at his very door.

THE GIPSY.

Who did?

A BEGGAR.

The Consulars.

THE GIPSY.

Impossible!

A BEGGAR.

They might well wish him ill! Never man accomplished so great a work.

THE GIPSY.

It is not a man, it is all of us who have done it.

THE SHEPHERD.

At last we shall be able to find a living!

THE GIPSY.

We! Come now! the soil of humanity would have to be quite differently turned up if the light is to come into our holes and corners. Peace or war,

Still we remain unchanging misery,
Nothing avails to us the idle come and go
Of sorrow or of joy.

Though with new laws Oppidomagne
Should this day set its bitted, bridled people free,
We only shall remain, God only knows till when,
The birds of prey, the wandering birds,
That, little piece by piece, tear up the greedy earth,
Like crows that rich men frighten from their homes,
Chasing them from their thresholds and their orchard-plots,
Although they give free welcome there
To the whole race of birds as free.

THE SHEPHERD.

You speak as if the Regency still lived. The country will be reborn. The cities are purging themselves.

THE GIPSY.

Fortunately! everything is only a going towards something, and to-morrow will always be dissatisfied with to-day.

[*A troop of drunken women crosses the scene, with torches. They shout: "To the churches! to the churches! Burn down God!" To the beggar:*

Look at those, there are your allies! When you and your friends have decided to be really men, come and look for me, as others went and found Hérénien.

(*He goes away.*)

GROUP OF WORKMEN.

[*Putting up a platform on which to lay the corpse of Hérénien. They bring the black cloth.*

—This is a bad business if there ever was one.

—He had two shots there, in the forehead.

—Was his son killed?

—No.

—Nobody knows which of the guards were the assassins. They got away. Perhaps we shall never know the name of the abominable coward who killed our tribune.

—There was fighting, outside the Regency. It took an hour to dislodge the consulars. Hérénien was already dead.

A Beggar.

They say Haineau killed him.

A Workman.

Haineau? You don't know what you are talking about! Haineau! why he is more distressed about it than we are.

A Beggar.

He was his enemy.

The Workman.

Be silent; you lie by all the teeth in your jaws.

The Beggar.

I say what I was told.

The Workman.

It is people like you who start all the foul stories.

[*Enemies and soldiers of Oppidomagne pass along arm in arm; and crowd on the terrace and steps.*

The Crowd.

—Will the holiday come off?

—Why not? It is the new leaders of Oppidomagne who ordered it.

—Never did Hérénien seem so great as in his death.

GROUP OF PASSERS.

—They carry him through the whole city in triumph.

—I saw him crossing the Marble Square. There was a red wound across his face.

—And I, I saw him pass the Haven Bridge;
Mothers with lifted arms
Held out their little ones to him,
So that all young and joyous things
That life can offer to a man
Hovered and bent above this man in death.

—He passes, garlanded with dedicated flowers;
The scarlet shroud enfolds him in a light of flames;
His body:
A very storm of love, like waves of the sea,
Billows him high and holds him over all men's heads;
Never did king, shining with gold,
With blood, with murder, and with battles,
Have at his death
So glorious and so kingly great a funeral.

—At the Colonnades, a young man made his way up to the litter. He dipped his handkerchief in the blood on the cheeks, and long and fervently, as if he received the host, he put it to his lips.

A WORKMAN (*who has heard them talking*).

Jacques Hérénien will be laid out here, on this platform, here, in our midst, in all his glory.

A Peasant.

It is good for the sun to see him.

Group of Passers.

—Tears, flowers, songs, blood, dances, fire: all conflicting ardours burn in the air!

—It is the right atmosphere when new worlds are created.

[*An immense influx; Le Breux, followed by soldiers and workmen, goes upon the step before a house and makes sign that he wishes to speak. Silence.*

Le Breux.

Citizens, in a few moments, you will see in this square of Oppidomagne, dedicated to the people, the body of Jacques Hérénien. Receive him as a conqueror. A few shots have been enough to close his eyes, stiffen his arms, immobilise his face, but not to kill him. Jacques Hérénien lives still, in his words, in his acts, in his thought, in his books; he is the force which now exalts us; he wills, thinks, hopes, acts in us. This is not his burial, it is his last victory. Stand back: he comes.

[*Children climb up on people's shoulders. Enormous anxiety in all groups. People get on the windows, climb columns.*

Different Groups on the Terraces.

—What a crowd! The square will never hold them!

—How they loved him! People like that ought never to die.

Group of Women.

—His wife follows the bier.

—It is she who is carrying the child.
—She is a Christian!
—A Roman!
—Silence: here is the body.

[*The bier comes forward, and is borne round the square; some weep, others cheer, others fall on their knees, some women make the sign of the cross. On the terraces, clusters of people squeeze together to see better.*

YOUNG MEN.

[*Marching before the body. With prayer and exultation.*

—Hérénien, Hérénien, you were our only master!
—There is not any spark of all my thought
You fanned not with your ardour, like a mighty wind.

—Hérénien, Hérénien, 'tis you survive in us!
We vow and dedicate to you
All that our souls one day
Shall fashion us of beauty and of strength and light
And purity in life!

—Hérénien, Hérénien, your memory
Shall be the pulse and heart-beat of the times to come!

—Hérénien, Hérénien, enliven us
That we be always thus, these mad and vehement ones,
That, in ill times,
Now past, your impulse hurried
Out of our weak and wandering ways
Into the whirlwind of your might!

[*The corpse is set down on the platform; women cover the black cloth with flowers.*

THE SEER.

[*Standing on one of the terraces above the crowd.*

What hour is near?
Sounds, not of tears, I hear.
This is indeed the hour
When, fatal to the gods, thunder has rolled
To cast them down, haggard and old,
Since sudden truth shines out, in vindicating power!

The hope of man is now again made flesh;
The old desire, replenished with new flowers, new youth,
Springs from the earth; now eyes have light and hearts have truth,
And these magnetic rays bind soul to soul afresh.

And now with shining palms veil over and hide deep
This mortuary crape that covers one asleep;
And now beware lest you profane
The worship and the fame
Of so pure, powerful, and divine a name,
Or this dead man has died in vain.

He was in harmony with the new birth
That waits the world, and with the stars, and time;
He has won life through mortal tumult, mortal crime;
He has crushed under him one of the plagues of earth!

[*Hordain rises in agitation. The crowd point to him and cheer. People tell one another who he is.*

THE CROWD.

—It was he who refused to attack Oppidomagne.
—He won over the enemy.
—He is as great as Hérénien.

HORDAIN (*pointing to the corpse*).

I was his disciple, and his unknown friend. His books were my Bible. It is men like this who give birth to men like me, humble, faithful, long obscure, but whom fortune permits, in one overwhelming hour, to realise the supreme dream of their master. If fatherlands are fair, sweet to the heart, dear to the memory, armed nations on the frontiers are tragic and deadly; and the whole world is yet bristling with nations. It is in their teeth that we give them this example of our concord. (*Cheers.*) They will understand some day the immortal thing accomplished here, in this illustrious Oppidomagne, whence the loftiest ideas of humanity have taken flight, one after another, through all the ages. For the first time since the beginning of power, since brains have reckoned time, two races, one renouncing its victory, the other its humbled pride, are made one in an embrace. The whole earth must needs have quivered, all the blood, all the sap of the earth must have flowed to the heart of things. Concord and goodwill have conquered hate. (*Cheers.*) Human strife, in its form of bloodshed, has been gainsaid. A new beacon shines on the horizon of future storms. Its steady rays shall dazzle all eyes, haunt all brains, magnetise all desires. Needs must we, after all these trials and sorrows, come at last into port, to whose entrance it points the way, and where it gilds the tranquil masts and vessels.

[*Enthusiasm of all: the people shout and embrace. The former enemies rise and surround Hordain. Those of Oppidomagne stretch their arms towards*

him. He disengages himself from them and lays palms at the feet of Hérénien. Then turning towards the widow:

In the name of life and the triumph of life, I demand of you, Claire Hérénien, to present to these two exultant people, him who seems to us to be Jacques Hérénien himself: his son! (*He holds out his arms to present the child.*)

CLAIRE (*staying him*).

I want to have strength to do it myself. (*She rises*).

Here, in the city's very heart,
Here, at this moment great with hope,
Upon this threshold of new days, that bring
A new beginning to the world;
Drying my tears, and calling on my will,
I dare confide to you this child, child of his flesh,
I dare devote this child to proud, to tragic duty,
To that chimaera, dazzling and divine,
His father bridled and broke in and rode.
I offer him to the future, jubilant in this place
Of feast and insurrection aureoled,
Here in this place of joy and sorrow, even here
Before you all, before the feet of this slain man
Who was Hérénien, and is dead!

[*Clare holds up the child in her arms for some time in the midst of cheers and waving of arms, then passes him to Hordain, and, unable to control herself any longer, falls sobbing on the corpse. Silence comes slowly.*

LE BREUX.

This hour is too great and too beautiful, it binds us too

intimately to each other, for us to think of oaths or terms of peace. In full liberty, in face of all that remains, inviolate and sacred, in face of this man of genius, whose murdered body and immortal soul enfever and inspire us, we give ourselves, each to each, for ever! [*Cheers.*

HORDAIN.

Yesterday, when with open hands and hearts we entered the city, I was amazed that he who more than all of us had realised our work should be present, in life, at his triumph. So great a conquest required so great a victim. If you consider under what strange circumstances Hérénien, without escort, without arms, offered himself to perhaps the last shot that was fired, you will believe, as I do, that his death is bound up in the mystery of the great and sovereign powers.

HAINEAU.

He broke under him the old power whose image still stands upright.

[*He points to the statue; there are cries: "Pull it down! Pull it down!" Workmen seize crowbars to pull it down, and mount the pedestal.*

He conquered its spawn, its dastard consuls, its bastard laws, its shameful customs, its paid armies.

THE CROWD.

Pull it down! Pull it down!

HAINEAU.

He purged its thieving banks, its treasury, its parliaments

and its councils: he slew all antagonisms. That image mocks his action.

[*He points to the statue.*

THE CROWD.

—Oh! the old brute!
—Luckless doll!
—Horrible drab!

ON ALL SIDES.

Pull it down! Pull it down!

THE CROWD.

—Throw it into the sewers!
—Break it! Smash it to pieces!
—Pull it down! Pull it down!

SOMEONE FROM THE FIELDS.

It was that that devoured us!

SOMEONE FROM THE CITIES.

It was that that blighted us!

SOMEONE FROM THE FIELDS.

It was death!

SOMEONE FROM THE CITIES.

It was crime!

ON ALL SIDES.

Pull it down! Pull it down!

A WORKMAN (*from the pedestal, to those around*).

Look out: it is going to fall, it is going to fall!

[*In the midst of outcries of hate the huge statue totters and falls. There is immediate silence. Then Haineau seizes the head, which remains intact, and, staggering under its colossal weight, flings it and breaks it, without a word, at the feet of Hérénien.*

THE SEER.

Now let the Dawn arise!

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